

Noël nouvelet!

(Christmas; New Year)

French traditional  
(arr. editors)

1. No - ël nou - ve - let! No - ël chan - tons i - cy;  
1. No - ël nou - ve - let! sing we this new No - ël!

Dé - vo - tes gens, ren - dons à Dieu mer - ci;  
Thank we now our God, and of his good - ness tell;

Chan - tons No - ël pour le Roi nou - ve - let:  
Sing we No - ël to greet the new - born King:

No - ël nou - ve - let! No - ël chan - tons i - cy!  
No - ël nou - ve - let! this new No - ël we sing!

2 Waking from sleep, this wonder did I see:  
In a garden fair there stood a beauteous tree,  
Whereon I spied a rose-bud opening.  
*Noël nouvelet!* this new Noël we sing!

All

3 How my heart rejoiced to see that sight divine,  
For with rays of glory did the rose-bud shine,  
As when the sun doth rise at break of day.  
This new Noël sing we: *Noël nouvelet!*

Ever

4 Then a tiny bird left off its song, to say  
Unto certain shepherds: 'Haste you now away!  
In Bethlehem the Lamb of God you'll see.'  
*Noël nouvelet!* this new Noël sing we!

Barbara  
Chuch  
Jim Cr  
Susan

5 Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem they found,  
Where the ox and ass the Infant did surround,  
Who in their manger slept upon the hay.  
This new Noël sing we: *Noël nouvelet!*

6 Then I saw a star which turned the night to day,  
Moving ever onward on its shining way,  
Leading to Bethlehem the kings all three.  
*Noël nouvelet!* this new Noël sing we!

all

7 Gold the first did carry; myrrh the next did bring;  
And the third bore incense, the garden perfuming,  
So that in paradise I seemed to dwell.  
*Noël nouvelet!* sing we this new Noël!

All

8 For forty days a nurse the Child sustained,  
Mary then a pair of turtle-doves obtained:  
In Simeon's hands she placed this offering.  
*Noël nouvelet!* this new Noël we sing!

Edp

- 9 Simeon saw the Child and lifted up his voice:  
 'Lo! my God and Saviour, in whom I rejoice;  
 Jesus, the Christ, the glory of Israël!  
*Noël nouvelet!* sing we this new Noël!
- \*10 Greatly did I marvel Simeon's words to hear,  
 Which a priest observed who shortly did appear,  
 Within a book those words to store away.  
 This new Noël sing we: *Noël nouvelet!*
- \*11 He of me demanded: 'Dost thou these words believe?  
 If thou dost assent, the heavens shall thee receive;  
 If thou dost deny, on hell's great gallows swing!  
*Noël nouvelet!* this new Noël we sing!
- 12 I beheld these wonders as on my bed I lay,  
 Dreaming of a Child all at the break of day:  
 Jesus of Nazareth I saw in my dreaming;  
*Noël nouvelet!* this new Noël we sing!
- \*13 Twelve are the days that to Noël belong;  
 Twelve are my verses, so doth end my song;  
 A day for each verse: a verse for every day;  
 This new Noël sing we: *Noël nouvelet!*

tr. editors

This is one of many early *noëls* that trace all or part of the Nativity narrative. A mysterious and enchanting *chanson d'aventure*, it has been reduced to banality in the versions of many carol-books. 'Noël nouvelet!' was sung at New Year, and was one of the most popular *noëls* in the sixteenth century. A copy in Villon's hand was found among his papers, while in Rabelais's *Pantagruel* (1532/3), Panurge describes his ideal spouse with a reference to verse 11: 'Ma femme sera cointe et jolie comme une petite chouette: Qui ne le croid, d'enfer au gibbet, Noel nouvelet!' ('My wife will be gentle and pretty, like a little owl: Whoever does not believe this, to the gallows of hell with him! *Noël nouvelet!*')

The earliest source is a late fifteenth-century manuscript (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Arsenal MS 3653; copied

1491-8?), which does not include the usual *timbre* or reference to the opening lines of an existing song to which the poem should be sung. The Arsenal Manuscript, elegantly prepared for a noble or royal family, is a rare example of the careful presentation by a professional scribe of the quite different types of *noël* which were passed on within the oral tradition, and presumably there was no need to provide *timbres*, because these *noëls* were not parodies and their tunes were well known. (Such monodic or polyphonic *chansons rustiques* were an important part of popular culture, and also had a place on the theatrical stage. The internal refrain lines and repetitions characteristic of the genre were regarded with disdain by contemporary poets.)

No indication of the tune for this carol appears until the