

A Virgin Unspotted

1. A virgin unspotted, the prophet foretold,
Should bring forth a Saviour, which now we behold,
To be our Redeemer from death, hell and sin,
Which Adam's transgression entangled us in.

Chorus

Now let us be merry, put sorrow away:
Our Saviour, Christ Jesus, was born on this day.

2. At Bethlehem city in Jewry, we know,
That Joseph and Mary together did go,
And there to be tallied with many they came,
Since Caesar Augustus commanded the same. *Chorus*

3. But when they had entered the city so fair,
A number of people so mighty was there,
That Joseph and Mary, whose substance was small,
Could find in the inn there no lodging at all. *Chorus*

4. Then they were constrained in a stable to lie,
Where horses and asses they used for to tie:
Their lodging so simple they took it no scorn,
Before the next morning our Saviour was born. *Chorus*

5. The King of all kings to this world having come,
They sought out fine linen to wrap Him in some,
And when she had swaddled her young Son so sweet,
Within an ox manger, she laid Him to sleep. *Chorus*

6. Then God sent an angel from Heaven so high,
To certain poor shepherds in fields where they lie,
And bade them no longer in darkness to stay,
Because that a Saviour was born on this day. *Chorus*

7. Then presently after the shepherds did spy
Vast numbers of angels that covered the sky;
They joyfully cried out and sweetly did sing,
To God be all glory, our heavenly King. *Chorus*

8. To teach us humility all this was done;
We learn haughty pride and resentment to shun:
A manger His cradle who came from above,
The great God of mercy, of peace, and of love. *Chorus*

Lyrics: Traditional English with revisions by R. Gillmann, 2007
Recommended Tune: [Judea](#) by William Billings (1746-1800)

“A Virgin Unspotted” is a Christmas carol with a long history. As I understand it, the oldest known version was published in 1661 with eight stanzas. Over the years, variations appeared as “A Virgin Most Blessed,” “A Virgin Most Pure,” and “In Bethlehem City.” The colonial American composer William Billings wrote a new tune (Judea) and changed the lyrics, apparently including three of the eight stanzas.

The carol is a retelling of the Christmas story in Elizabethan English. The Chanticleer recording of Billings’ tune ([Sing We Christmas CD](#)) shows the carol’s beauty. I tried to keep the revisions to a minimum and retain the Elizabethan feel. Awkward accents on words ending in “ed” were changed and clarity improved.