

Introduction

In the ancient church the seven “Great O Antiphons” were used as the antiphons for the Magnificat at Vespers, one antiphon during each of the last seven days of Advent. They later formed the basis for the familiar Advent hymn “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” based on a Latin hymn from the 12th century and translated by John Mason Neale (1818–1866).

This service consists of a cycle of three recurring parts: 1) the singing of a four-part (SATB) choral setting of each successive antiphon, followed by 2) a new meditation by the poet Jill Peláez Baumgaertner for each antiphon, and concluding with 3) the appropriate congregational hymn stanza to be sung by the congregation. Following the choral setting and the poetic meditation, a brief period of silence may be observed for reflection.

The choral settings could also be used for other Advent services and concerts.

The organ intonations may or may not be used. Pitches may be given from a pitch pipe, if desired.

The first version of the hymn text is the Neale translation as altered for *The Hymnal 1940* and *The Hymnal 1982*; it appears also in *Lutheran Service Book*. The alternate text version (pp. 26–27) is from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

It is hoped that these choral settings and poetic meditations, combined with the congregational singing of this familiar Advent hymn, may bring renewed richness and meaning to the observance of the Advent season in congregational life.

~ Carl Schalk

The Great O Antiphons: A Service for Advent
Music by Carl Schalk
Poetry by Jill Peláez Baumgaertner

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O Wisdom

*O Wisdom, proceeding from the mouth of the Most High,
pervading and permeating all creation, mightily ordering all things:
come and teach us the way of prudence.*

Carl Schalk

Moderato (♩ = 72)

Organ

6 Soprano *mp*

Alto *mp*

(for rehearsal only)

O Wisdom, O Wisdom

10

8 Tenor *mp*

Bass *mp*

10

dom, O Wisdom, dom, pro -

Wis - dom, O Wisdom, dom, pro -

O Wisdom, dom, pro -

O Wisdom, dom, pro -

Soprano

15

Alto
ceed-ing from the mouth of the Most High, per -

Tenor

Bass

20

vad - ing and per - me - at - ing all cre - a - tion,
cre - a - tion,

25

might-i - ly or - der - ing all things: come, teach us,
come and

30

come, teach us, come and teach us,
come,

34

way of pru - dence, of of pru - dence.
of pru - dence.

THE MEDITATION

Prudence is not a word
we love. It inhibits our choice.
We prefer the allure of tinsel
and artifice, the relentless
tug toward the flesh
of a paltry beauty.

And we inhabit a planet
of uncertainty.
Who is the friend
and where the enemy,
as we are pulled
this way and that?
We extend our hand
or should we fight
instead?

Now Wisdom speaks,
parsing, separating,
reordering, steering us
from quicksand's brink,
the enfleshed Word
steady on firm terrain.
We balance there
between yes and no.

We await him.
Come, Lord Jesus.

THE HYMN

(sung by the assembly)

O come, thou Wisdom from on high,
who ord'rest all things mightily:
to us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel



1 O come, thou Wis-dom from on high, who ord-'rest all things
 2 O come, O come, thou Lord of might, who to thy tribes on
 3 O come, thou Branch of Jes - se's tree, free them from Sa-tan's



might - i - ly: to us the path of know - ledge show,
 Si - nai's height in an - cient times didst give the Law
 tyr - an - ny that trust thy might - y pow'r to save,



and teach us in her ways to go.
 in cloud, and maj - es - ty, and awe. Re-joyce! Re-joyce!
 and bring them vic - t'ry o'er the grave.



Em-man - u - el shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>5 O come, thou Key of David, come,
 and open wide our heav'nly home;
 make safe the way that leads on high,
 and close the path to misery. <i>Refrain</i></p> | <p>7 O come, Desire of nations, bind
 in one the hearts of all mankind;
 bid thou our sad divisions cease,
 and be thyself our King of Peace. <i>Refrain</i></p> |
| <p>6 O come, thou Dayspring from on high,
 and cheer us by thy drawing nigh;
 disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
 and death's dark shadows put to flight. <i>Refrain</i></p> | <p>8 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
 and ransom captive Israel,
 that mourns in lonely exile here
 until the Son of God appear. <i>Refrain</i></p> |

Text: *Psalterium Cantionum Catholicarum*, Köln, 1710; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–1866, alt.
 Music: VENI, EMMANUEL, French processional, 15th cent.

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