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# Lutheran Hymns in English Translations

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# LUTHER'S HYMNS IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

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"Nothing in the past is
dead to one who wishes
to know how the future
came to be what it is."

In the kingdom of God,as well as in the world in general which has become the kingdom of His Christ (Rev.11,15),we find a great diversity of gifts. Quite as evident is the difference in measure or degree to which the individual is endowed with particular gifts. Thus to the one God has entrusted five talents,another is given two,another but one. No matter how many talents the individual has received,it is his duty to make the best possible use of those with which he has been endowed in the interest of the heavenly Father and that "Father's business." The person who is highly gifted is expected to employ his gifts,or gift,as conscientiously as one who is less talented,and vice versa. This the Ruler and Redeemer of men and their destinies can and does expect.

No better example of one "true to a trust" can be found that Dr. Luther. We can never enough admire that degree of faithfulness which was pre-eminently his. Luther can justly be compared with that servant,in the parable of our Lord,to whom five talents were entrusted,and who made such good use of them that he received the praise of his master. As one writer has remarked,"We know of no one in the history of the church since the time of the Apostles whom God supplied with so many remarkable gifts,and who used those gifts so faithfully and effectively as did Luther."* It is not our intention to deify or canonize Luther,but only to give credit where credit is due. And certainly there is no justification for stinted praise when we consider Luther's accomplishments in the field of hymnody!

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* E.Poppen:(Der Reformator Als Liederdichter) Theo. Zeitbl.,Vol.VI,p.418.

On the contrary we must emphasize the credit which is rightly his in view of repeated attempts to underestimate his work and worth. In the demoniacal zeal of Catholics to demonize Luther,to undermine his influence, it does not surprise us at all that they would discredit his hymns,denounce them as dribble,or deny them originality. If a demon they consider him, then Catholic polemicists have forgotten among other things the courtesy of "giving even the devil his due"! What disturbs one more,however,is the indifference of Protestants over against the merits of this great Father of Church Hymnody. In historical works and hymnological treatises one detects ill-concealed efforts of writers to rank Luther far below Zwingli, Calvin,and -- of all people! -- Melanchton. But the "most unkindest cut of all",one that has accelerated this study of Luther's hymns,has been inflicted by many within our Lutheran Church itself. Sometimes this becomes evident when one notes the verbal stabs at the hymns as being harsh,"wanting in harmony and correctness of meter","jarring to our modern ears", "timeless,perhaps,but not timely". More often it is made conspicuous by the secret disdain,or the total disuse into which the great masterpieces of Luther have fallen. One cannot deny that there is a growing tendency in many of our churches to substitute the sickening,sentimental and subjective Gospel-songs for the virile,courageous and majestic We-hymns which Luther fathered.

Nothing makes so forcible and lasting an impression as contrast, nor are truths taught more easily through the employment of another method of presentation. Perhaps,then,in prefacing a study of Luther's hymns, no better means of evaluating the Reformer's real worth could be used than a contrast of the German Hymnology of the Medieval Period with that of the Reformation.

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Is it true that there were no church hymns in use before the Reformation Period? The correct answer to this question depends largely upon what is understood by the term,church-hymn. We must keep in mind that opinions of the proper definition may vary,but all eminent hymnologists are agreed as to certain fundamental characteristics.

* The term,"hymn",as such is rather loosely used in English, signifying most any kind of sacred song,even those not Christian. The term is also applied to a certain type of religious songs,commonly known as Gospel hymns. A hymn in the best sense of the word is coupled with "church" just as in the German Geistlicheslied,Volkslied,Kirchenlied.Dr. Julian,in his monumental work,defines the church hymn as "a popular religious lyric in praise of God to be sung by the congregation in public worship." ** Enlarging upon this definition we may say that,positively, it is (1) the best and highest type of song,or "Lied". It dare not be mediocre or commonplace. At the same time (2) it must be entirely popular ("Volkstümlich"); it must appeal to the people as such,remaining within the realm of popular conception,or the intellectual conception of the average individual.(A church-hymn is sometimes,and with some justification,called a religious folksong.) (3) It must be churchly. This includes a certain dignity more easily perceived than defined. It must at once take the individual out of "this labyrinth,called Life",away from the association with the drab and commonplace,and lift him into communion with God. Necessarily,then,it must have as its theme the great acts of God for the salvation of the care-ridden,sin-riddled souls of men,as revealed in Holy Writ and as expressed by the believing heart. To be a real church-hymn,(4) it must be coupled with fitting music.*** And finally,(5) it must be sung.

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* Based on notes of lectures in Hymnology by Prof. W.G.Polack.
** Dictionary,p.412.
*** Luther:"Die Noten machen den Text lebendig."

Negatively considered,a church-hymn must contain nothing that is not true. It must not be uncouth,harsh,or obscure. It goes without saying that suggestive terms,and racy,sentimental lines so common in this jazz-band age of jingles and jungle music,have no place in the church-hymn. Some,indeed,fault Dr.Luther just on this score,but the apology will be reserved until a later paragraph. Keeping these several principles in mind, we may proceed to examine briefly the German Hymnology bbefore Luther.

Already in the 4th century many and radical changes took place in the life of the church which mightily affected her hymnody. We have a reason for this in the recognition of Christianity as the religion of the Empire,linked with its government. This union of Church and State increased the formulism and ecclisiasticism of the Church — a trend to make a distinction between the laity and the clergy. The latter became a special and higher class than the laity*,and formed a "sort of channel of God's grace through whom alone the laymen could approach God"(Sacerdotalism). As the rights of the individual were pushed into the background,the rights of the clergy were increased.

Since the clergy were the chief participants in the liturgy, congregational singing was stifled,and finally silenced altogether.** This change is apparent from the resolutions of the Council of Laodicea, (343-381 A.D.). In the canons of this council we meet with two significant prohibitions,particularly relevant here. We read in the 15th Canon:

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* Qualben: History of the Christian Church,p.124:"In the course of the fourth and fifth centuries and ever-widening chasm developed between clergy and laity,until the view prevailed that only the clergy constituted the Church proper. (3) The clergy became a special order,with special customs and a distinct career. The clergy was separated from the laity not only by their official capacity,but also,as it was believed,by higher and religious moral gifts and an indelible character imparted through ordination."

** Gillman: Evolution of the English Hymn,p.12[illegible]:"Hymnody had become the special preserve of the clergy and the people had been bowed out."

"Besides the Psalmsingers,appointed thereto,who mount the ambo and sing out of the book,no other shall sing in the church." The other Canon, referring to hymns of human composure,is the 59th:"Psalms composed by private men (psalmoi idiotikoi) must not be read in the church,nor uncanonical books,but only the canonical books of the Old and New Testament." For a proper understanding of these decretals,it must be remembered that the seed grains of Gnostic and Arian heresies had been disseminated by means of the hymns of the heretics.* Though this was but a provincial synod,and not an ecumenical council,it became the custom that the action of one synod would be accepted and approved by other syhods. Ultimately, then,congregational singing was excluded in both the Eastern and Western Church. After the introduction of the "Gregorian Chant" by Gregory the Great,based on the Ambrosian chants,the congregation no longer took an active part in the service. It was never adopted by the people; the difficulties it involved as also the insistence upon the use of Latin practically limited its use to the clergy and trained body of singers."The Gregorian Chant in its very essence already is of the sacerdotal office and naturally excludes the participation of the congregation." Thus the Catholic Church gradually but consistently withdrew the singing of the people from the church service and invested the office of song in the minor clergy (choir-boys); this singing and chanting on the part of the clergy was in many quarters regarded as a semi-clerical function. Congregational singing was never encouraged by the Catholic Church,and even at the present day song is looked upon as essentially a liturgic office.

However,there were lovers of the church-hymn who retained and advocated congregational singing,such as Chrysostom,and Ephraem Syrus, who was styled the "Lyre of the Holy Ghost." Syrians ascribe some 12,000

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* P.E.Kretzmann: Christian Art,p.319.

songs to him,but this number is doubtless erroneous,for it must be kept in mind that all the songs of his school are credited to him. Ambrose was also an eminent advocate of Church songs,being the editor and compiler of a number of hymns,many being composed by himself. The influence of Ambrose of Milan went far beyond his own diocese. We can but mention other outstanding hymnwriters of this period: Hilary of Poitiers*, Fortunatus,Gregory Nazianzus,Anatolius,the Venerable Bede,John Damascenus,Stephan ofSSt. Sabas,Joseph of the Studium,and Rhabanus Maurus. Julian traces the sequence "Veni Creator Spiritus" (though he reaches no positive conclusion) to his facile pen.** This sequence is truly a gem and has been translated countless times,also by Luther. We cannot refrain from offering a free translation of one of its verses,as found in the old Anthem Book of Worcester Cathedral:

"Enable with perpetual light
The darkness of our blinded sight;
Anoint and cheer our soiled face
With the abundance of Thy grace.
Keep far our foes; give peace at home;
Where Thou art Guide,no ill can come."

Nevertheless,by the 9th century,the era of the Christianization of Germany,the congregation is silent altogether. Although the German peoples were fond of singing,as Tacitus records***,yet the advent of Christianity in its crystalized form described above,nipped the budding German literature,and the Latin language came to be that of the Church,the court,and the law. And as Julian remarks,"This (the Latin) was an efficient means for preserving the unity of the church,and facilitating literary intercourse among scholars,but prevented for a long time the free and full development of a vernacular hymnody."**** Gone were the days when St.Augustine in his

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*"St.Hillary has been called "the Father of Christian Hymnology". About the middle of the 4th century he regulated the ecclesiastical song-service, wrote chant music (to Scripture words or his own) and prescribed its place and use.in choirs. He died A.D.368."Brown & Butterworth,Introd.,xiii.
** Dictionary,p.1208.
**** Dictionary,p.413

"Confessions" (Book IX,chap.VI) testified to the effect of the hymns and music introduced into the church of Milan by Ambrose*; and only here and there the people continued the practice of uttering the response Kyrie eleison,at certain intervals during the singing of Latin hymns and psalms, which finally developed into a confused clamor of voices. To this response we trace the first feeble attempts at German hymnody,for a few rhymes were added to the Kyrie eleison,from the last syllable of which these earliest German hymns were called leisen or leiche.** The most ancient of these,called the Leich vom heil. Petrus, dates from the 9th century. The first stanza reads:

"Unsar trohtin hat farsalt sancte Petre giwalt
Daz er mag ginerjan zeimo dingenten man.
Kyrie eleyson! Christe eleyson!" ***

That is:"Our Lord delivered power to St.Peter that he may preserve the man who hopes in him. Lord,have mercy upon us! Christ,have mercy upon us!" But these leisen were confined to popular festivals,and pilgrimages,and were never used in the mass service. Not until the 12th century did the leisen become the common property of the German people. The previous century ha d been a time of darkness,of which few literary vestiges in German exist. From 1100 to 1500,however,many wonderful changes came over Germany. The Crusades,to which civilization owes so much,had put an end to the clerical preponderance in German literature. The interests and sympathies of the people were with the knights now -- not with the priests. Royal courts and castles offered a new home to the poets of Germany, and were preferred to the monasteries of Fulda and St.Gall.

Very soon a large class of lyrical poets sprang up,who are

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* "How I did weep,O Lord,through thy hymns and canticles,touched to the quick by the voices of thy sweet-attuned church! The voices sank into mine ears,and the truths distilled into mine heart,whence the affections of my devotions overflowed; tears ran down and I rejoiced in them."
**Julian: Dictionary,p.413; Quarterly Rev. of the Ev. Luth.Ch.,p.192.
*** Miss Winkworth has given an imitation in Christian Singers of Germany, (London 1869) p.28.

known to us as the "minne-singers" ("Minnesänger")and who,as Dr.Julian points out,"glorified earthly and heavenly,sexual and spiritual love,after the model of Solomon's Song,and the Virgin Mary as the type of pure womanhood."* Several of the best of the Latin hymns were translated repeatedly at this time, such as the "Veni Creator Spiritus," referred to above,the "Te Deum," the Gloria in excelsis," the "Lauda Sion salvatorem," and the "Salve caput cruentatem." However,these hymns were seldom permitted to be sung in churches because of the papal opposition. Their use on many other occasions is intimated by St. Francis of Asissi,in an address to his monks in the year 1221.** About this time there was also a very interesting and significant development — macaronic composition in which the Latin was mixed with the vernacular. The most familiar example of this hybrid of hymnody is the charming "In dulci jubilo"***,erroneously attributed to Peter Dresdensis.****

In the 14th century sects,anathematized by Rome,were also active and favored the singing of hymns. Reference must be made to the German Flagellants,the Bohemians,the Waldensians,and the Mystics. John Tauler (1294-1361), styled the "Doctor sublimis et illuminatus",was the most famous representative of the Mystic school. His hymns are more for the retired people of the country,and "full of glowing love to God." The Flagellants,an association which came into Germany from Italy,exercised even greater spiritual influence,for they moved in great companies through the land,singing penitential hymns. They were particularly active during the plague in 1349,which carried off 1,200,000 in Germany. Their peculiar customs and practices were some-

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* Dictionary,p. 415

** "There is a certain country called Germany,wherein dwell Christians,and of truth,very pious ones,who as you know often come as pilgrims into our land,with their long staves and great boots; and amid the most sultry heat and bathed in sweat,yet visit all the thresholds of the holy shrines,and singshymns of praise to God and all His saints."

*** Translation: Christian Singers,p.84. Cf. Julian: Dictionary,p.413

**** W.Nelle gives a detailed description in his Gesch. d. deut. ev. Kirchenl.,p.18-19

what akin to those of the Flagellants in Mexico today with which we are acquainted. Though Clement VI issued a bull against them (Oct.20,1349) to eradicate the sect,the use of hymns in the vernacular became more common. Many ministers took pains to propogate them among the people. Now experience confirms the old adage that "Forbidden fruit tastes good"; at least it contains enough truth to justify its quotation here.* The German people welcomed these sacred songs as is evidenced when one consults the second volume of Wackernagel's monumental work,"Das Deutsche Kirchenlied",which exhibits nearly 1500 specimens.

But the German religious lyrics,like the old Latin hymns,were all of them addresses to the saints,above all,to the Virgin Mary. Says [illegible]:

> "The German hymnody of the Middle Ages overflows with hagiolatry and Mariolatry. The former class is not very important,either as to number or to quality,but the Marien Lieder,and,in a minor degree, Annen Lieder (hymns to Mary and Anna) constitute a very large and well known class among the poems of the Ante-Reformation time in Germany. They form a sort of spiritual counterpart to the minnesongs or love songs addressed to his earthly lady by the knight. It was easy to transfer the turn of expression and tone of thought from the earthly object to the heavenly one,and the degree to which this is done is very often startling. The honors and titles belonging to our Lord Jesus Christ are attributed to his mother; God is said to have created the world by her (*),and to have rested on the seventh day.;she is said to have risen on the third day and ascended into heaven; she is addressed,not only as the persuasive mediator with her son,but as herself the chief source of mercy and help,especially in the hour of death,and at the day of judgment. By degrees,her mother is invested with some of her attributes; for it is said,if Christ would obey his mother,ought she not much more to obey hers? So a set of hymns to Anna sprang up,in which she is entreated to afford aid in death, and obtain pardon for sinners from Christ and Mary,who will refuse her nothing."***

A favorite in the catalog of Marien Lieder was "Dich Frau vom Himmel ruf ich an." Another is the Christmas carol "Es ist ein Reis entsprungen",which has come down to us in many translations and still retains its charm.The

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* Cf. also the Latin: Nitimur in vetitum,semper cupimusque negata.
** Wackernagel,II,p.15:"...she preexisted with God at the creation...all things are created in her and for her."
*** Winkworth: Christian Singers of Germany (London 1869),p.96,97

melody is especially tender and plaintive,breathing somehow the true Christmas sentiment. It was originally a "Mary-song" of twenty-three stanzas*, and later Christianised by Luther. Miss Winkworth's translation** is one of real merit,but we offer here the first stanza of a translation,not so widely used, yet particularly beautiful:

"There rose a Spray to Glory
From Jesse's mighty tree.
It is the old,old story
That comes from Galilee.
And from that Spray anew
Arose,in midst of winter,
A blossom pure and true."

Then,even as Catholics think of her today,Mary was regarded as the "Janitor et Regina Coeli",the only refuge for sinners,the supreme object of adoration and imprecation.*** Dr. Julian has summarized the characteristics as follows:"The medieval hymnody celebrates Mary as the 'Ewig-Weibliche,' which draws men irresistibly heavenward. It resembles the Sistine Madonna of Raphael,who painted Christ as a child,even in heaven,on the arms of the Queen of Heaven."****

German hymnology developed itself more fully towards the end of the 15th century,at the head of which stands John Hus,the Bohemian reformer. Hus was professor at the Universitybof Prague,later dean of its theological faculty,and,at the same time,pastor of the Bethlehem chapel at Prague,erected by John de Milheim (1391) to afford the people an opportunity of hearing the Gospel in their native tongue. In this position he exerted great influence, for,although an application for leave to substitute the vernacular ritual had been denied in no uncertain terms by the Pope,Gregory XIII,Hus urged the necessity of the change and found himself estranged from Rome and entangled in

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* W.Nelle: Geschichte d. deut. ev. Kirchenl.,p.21:"Das alt Trierisch Christliedlein"..."Ein Marienlied von 25 Strophen."
** Christian Singers,p.85.
*** Popular Symbolics,Mariolatry,pp.198-200.
**** Dictionary,p.414

the meshes of papal perfidy. To further the cause,he composed many hymns,which were adopted by the Bohemian and the Moravian Brethren,and carefully revised the old Bohemian version of the Bible. One of his hymns,"Jesus Christus nostra salus",was later translated into German by Luther. The fate of Hus is well known. His followers organized themselves into a separate church,one of the peculiarities of which was the free use of hymns and prayers in their mother tongue.** In 1504 these hymns,together with many already in existence,were collected and published by the archbishop Lucas,and constituted the first hymnbook composed of orginal compositions in the vernacular to be found in any Western land which had once owned the supremacy of Rome.

The activity of these Bohemians exerted an influence on Germany, particularly in a time when the demand for a reformation became more insistent. Of the men who did most for the introduction of German hymns into the Church and exercised their influence on its development,we mention three in passing. Peter Dresdensis ( ✝ 1440,Prague) made great efforts to introduce hymns in the vernacular into the service of the Mass. One very active in transforming secular hymns into religious lyrics was Henry of Loufenberg,a priest at Freiburg and afterward a monk of the monastery of St.John in Strassburg. He also translated many of the great Latin hymns into German, such as the "Ave maris stella," the"Puer natus in Bethlehem," the "Deus creator omnium," and the "Veni Redemptor gentium." Quite a few specimens of his compostion are extant,some of which are graceful and sweet. Besides these two,we must mention Johann Böschenstein,born at Esslingen,1477,and believed to have been a converted Jew. Frederick the Wise called him to the professorship of Greek and Hebrew at the University of Wittenberg in 1518.

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* Qualben, A History of the Christian Church,p. 290; 382

** Julian: Dictionary,p.416.

Besides his writings in prose,he also wrote some hymns. The best of these,"Da Jesus an dem Kreuze stund",which he made in 1515,was sung before the Reformation during Holy Week in some churches.

We have thus sketched very briefly the development of German Hymnology,noting the chief characteristics and prominent exponents,and how the decline in congregational singing went hand in hand with the degredation of church practice. Such a survey may serve as a background as we now approach the study of Luther's remarkable gifts and abilities as a hymnwriter,his noteworthy contributions,his efforts in this field,and his influence on the later hymnody of the Church.

-: II :-

"The world slept long in error's deepest night,
Knew nothing of the glorious sun of grace,
Slept on and on blind 'gainst the heavenly light
That beamed upon it from its Savior's face.
And though some groped and sought a guiding star
From hideous superstition's tearful maze,
They found it not,though wandering near and far,
And lost themselves again in darker ways.
But,oh,what fair,what happy morning broke
upon our world when in the land was heard
Thy song that told again the Gospel tale!
Then billions to the glorious light awoke
And fed their famished souls on God's free Word
And blessed thee,Wittenberg's sweet nightingale."
F.W. Herzberger.

Luther is called the "Father of Evangelical Hymnody." Sometimes he is called even more: "The Father of the Hymnbook"; "The Father of Congregational Singing"; "The Ambrose of German Hymnody".* It is best,however,if we confine ourselves to the first,for,as we have seen,there were hymnals and congregational singing before Luther,embrionic and inferior as these may have been. That much is acknowledged by all the world. In this matter his place

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* Julian: Dictionary,p.414

is not disputed. Luther was God's instrument to give back to the people not only the privilege of congregational singing,but the song itself. The whole Protestant world,and the Roman Catholic as well,has learned to sing the praises of God from the Nightingale of Wittenberg,whose church became known as "the singing church." The details of Luther's life,and of his work as a reformer,are accessible to English readers in a great variety of forms,and need not be repeated here,for that would take us too far afield. However,a thumbnail sketch of his early life is warranted,yes necessary,if one is to do him justice,to evaluate his worth and work as a hymnist.

Martin Luther was born in the little mining village of Eisleben, Germany,on November 10,1483. Since the following day was dedicated to St. Martin,he received the name of this saint at his baptism. His parents,Hans and Margaret Luther,were poor,yet pious,people---typical children of their time. One tells that Hans knelt at the cradle of his little son,praying that the Lord would deal kindly with the lad and make him a worthy servant in His kingdom. From year to year the Father found that his petition was being heard, for this son was God's chosen vessel,the instrument through which He brought about a reformation of the Church. As a skillful Potter,the Almighty moulded and made him after His will.

We must marvel at this handiwork of God! How well He had fashioned Luther to meet special needs! It is to be feared that often the versatility of the man is not praised highly enough. Is it not miraculous that this great Reformer,who was so burdened with lecturing,preaching,writing,translating, visiting,arbitrating,and ministering to the spiritual needs of multitudes,is it not miraculous that he should also find time to write hymns and compose? From such an one we would expect only and amateurish product or two at best.

Instead, this rugged Reformer became the forerunner and pattern in the realm of church hymns and congregational song.*

If we compare Luther as a hymnwriter with other chosen vessels of God, other reformers, his marvelous versatility comes to light. There was Philip Melanchton, Luther's associate. He, too, wrote hymns — Latin hymns and poems which have not the slightest influence upon the church-hymn. In our present hymnal (published 1911) we have but one of his hymns, translated by Paul Eber: (# 286) "Lord God, we all to Thee give praise." He was denied the gift of smooth composition in German, or he would certainly have given Luther the requested aid in the composition and preparation of evangelical church-hymns. The same must be said of the other collaborers of Luther who, although they supported and encouraged him in his efforts with regard to sacred songs, nevertheless did not labor so much as he and do not compare with him at all. And then, in view of Zwingli's early apathy for congregational singing in the service and also his one-sided view of Psalmsinging in the church** — in view of this one could not expect that, as a hymnwriter, he would offer Luther much competition. But again, "credit where credit is due." Zwingli was also a learned and gifted man. He composed spiritual songs and set many to music himself; but they did not become the common property of Christendom as the majority of Luther's hymns. Zwingli set up as ideal the pious inner prayer that all Christians should perform, but there was to be no "noise" of song. "True worshipers," said he in 1523, "call upon God in spirit and in truth without any noise before men." In corroboration he quoted Amos 5,23: "Take

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*E. Poppen: Der Reformator Als Liederdichter, p. 417, "Luther ward auch auf dem Gebiet des Kirchenlieds und Gemeindegesangs ... zum Bahnbrecher und Muster, dem andere folgen mussten."

** Julian: Dictionary, p. 414, "Zwingli and Calvin, the Swiss reformers, held the principle that the Word of God should have supreme dominion in public worship, and that no productions of man should be allowed to take its place. This principle raised the Psalter to new dignity and power. Versified versions of the Psalter became the first hymnbooks of the Reformed churches."

thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols." It is interesting to note that while Julian in his Dictionary of Hymnology treats of Luther as a hymnwriter in detail,and adds with very few exceptions a paragraph regarding each hymn,the reference to Zwingli is but meagre.

Nor does Calvin fair much better. He,too,wished to know nothing of congregational singing. Later on as he bethought himself for a better substitute,he permitted only the singing of metrical versions of the Psalms. "Only God's Word is fit for the worship of the Church," he insisted. Calvin was not gifted as a poet,or hymnwriter,and had to depend upon friends to clothe the Psalms in French rhymes and set them to music. It was the great French poet of the 16th century,Clement Marot,court poet to Francis I of France,who began the versification of the Psalter into French. While Calvin was an exile in Geneva,however,he published the first Psalm-book of the Reformed Church (1539),which contained 18 psalm versions,17 in meter,and one in prose,and three other pieces with melodies attached. Of the Psalms, 12 are by Marot,and 5 by Calvin himself. It remained for Theodore Beza to complete the versification of the Psalter,a task he accomplished in 1552. The melodies were harmonized,<u>not</u> composed,by the celebrated Claude Goudimel,who followed the Lutheran pattern.

Knox,the Scotch Reformer,whose "mingled sob and hosanna" was so despised by Queen Elizabeth,likewise did not appreciate the worth of the church-hymn,being an adherent of Calvin's theology and practice. Regardless of how one judges the theological standpoint of the reformers,one must admit with due regard for the truth,that Luther was the most gifted and many-sided of them all. And should we care to include the Wesleys in this comparison,we note that they were no <u>forerunners</u> in the matter of congregational

singing,even though we recognize their great talent and worth in the field of church-hymns.

The question,then,resolves itself into this: How did Martin Luther--disregarding his great importance to the Church in other ways---become the first great hymnwriter? History shows,as we have noted,that the Church was thoroughly corrupt,in need of a thorough reformation. Papal decision and the decretals of councils had silenced the music and the song. A thoroughly gifted man was needed,and God supplied that need. He endowed Luther with natural gifts,without which a poet or musician demand remains a dabbler. When God moulds a man for a special work,He also supplies him with the necessary gifts and training. Luther was pre-eminently a man of the people,a great "commoner." The following words of Luther seem to carry more than a mere confession:"I am a peasant's son. My father,grandfather, and ancestors were all peasants."* Luther knew and loved his people,as the popular expressions of his language manifest.And,as Qualben remarks,"The German people recognized him as one of their own and listened to him; they loved him as few German leaders have ever been loved."** As the son of poor parents*** he had contact with the common people and knew their joys and sorrows,their hopes and fears,and also their faults. Writes the American church historian,Dr, Philip Schaff:"He was a genuine man of the people,rooted and grounded in rustic soil,but looking boldly and trustinglybto heaven. He was a plebian,without a drop of patrician blood, and never ashamed of his lowly origin." He inherited the Teutonic love for

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* Jacobs: Martin Luther,p. 4. So also Qualben,p.205,"The father of the great reformer was self-reliant,enterprising,and energetic...In Mansfeld he soon acquired a respectable official position."
** Qualben: A History of the Christian Church,p.206.
*** We would not perpetuate the false idea that Luther grew up in grinding, squalid poverty. Luther's grandfather and father were free peasants. We know,furthermore,that Hans Luther was quite successful as a miner,and wielded no little influence in his community. Cf. quotation from Qualben above.

song,and "possessed a sweet voice of good quality and power."* Undoubtedly as a boy he knew and used the rich treasure of the German folk song. While a student Luther and his companions frequently went carolling,for he tells us: "I used to beg with my companions for a little food that we might have means for providing for our wants. At the time the Church celebrates the festival of Christ's nativity,we went wandering through the native villages,going from house to house,and singing,in four parts,the carols of the infant Jesus."** F.W.Herzberger has beautifully versified the incident in the following:

"'For the love of God,ye Christians
Give me bread!' thus sang the boy,
And in Eisanach the people
Listened to his song with joy.

"Touched by his sweet,plaintive chorals,
They would fill his empty hand,
Little dreaming what a harvest
Their poor gifts would soon command."

Young Luther also sang in the church choir and earned for himself the nickname of "The Musician."*** This exercise and training later stood him in good stead. He was likewise a passionate devotee of good instrumental music and was adept at playing the flute and the lute. Nor will it do to overlook or minimize the personal benefit he received from acquaintance with the majestic,yet mystical and complicated chants and rituals as a priest of the Roman Catholic Church. "I place music next to theology," he said in later life.**** In the concord of sweet sounds he found solace in trouble,and stimulus for his exhausting enterprises. What Luther thought of music may be seen from what he said many years before Shakespeare wrote the famous passage about "the man what hath no music in himself":

> "There is no doubt that many seeds of splendid virtue are to be found in such souls as are stirred by music; and them who have no feeling for it I hold no better than stocks and stones. If any man despise music as all fanatics do,for him

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* The humanist,Mosellanus,said,"He has a soft,clear voice,great learning..."
** Quoted in W.G.Polack's Favorite Christian Hymns,Vol.I,p.9
*** Gillman: The Evolution of the English Hymn,p.286
**** Ibid.**

> I have no liking; for music is a gift and grace of God,not and invention of men. Thus it expels the Devil and makes people cherrful. Then one forgets all wrath,impurity,sycophancy,and other vices. Next to theology I give music the highest and most honorable place; and everyone knows how David and all saints have put their divine thoughts in verse,rhyme and song."*

Sacred music he regarded as a moral power for good,and an important element in the proper education of his people. No teacher,he maintained,was worthy of the name who could not teach music; and therefore we can understand why he was most desirous that his own son should be properly educated in it. And not only his own,but all children did he desire to have taught to sing: "For I would fain see all arts,especially music,in the service of Him who has given and created them."** We know also that it was Luther's custom, whether he dined at home or abroad,to spend the after-dinner hour in company with his friends,singing songs to the accompaniment of his lute.Perhaps Luther's estimate of music finds its best expression in one of his poems,the famous <u>Discourse on Music</u> which has been handed down from generation to generation:

Lady Music Speaketh

"Of all the joys that are on earth
Is none more dear nor higher worth,
Than what in my sweet songs is found
And instrument of various sound.
Where friends and comrades sing in tune,
All evil passions vanish soon;
Hate,envy,anger cannot stay,
All gloom and heartache melt away;
The lust of wealth,the cares that cling,
Are all forgotten while we sing.
Freely we take our joy herein,
For this sweet pleasure is no sin,
But pleaseth God far more we know,
Than any joys the world can show;
The Devil's work it doth impede,
And hinders many a deadly deed.
So fared it with King Saul of old;

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* Winkworth: Christ. Sing. p.107
** Ibid. p.106

When David struck his harp of gold,
So clear and sweet the tones rang out
Saul's murderous thoughts were put to rout.
The heart grows still when I am heard,
And opens to God's Truth and Word;
So are we by Elisha taught,
Who on the harp the Spirit sought.
The best time of the year is mine,
When all the little birds combine
To sing until the earth and air
Are filled with sweet sounds everywhere;
And most the tender nightingale
Makes joyful every wood and dale,
Singing here love-song o'er and o'er,
For which we thank her evermore.
But yet more thanks are due from us
To the dear Lord who made her thus,
A singer apt to touch the heart,
Mistress of all my dearest art.
To God she sings by night and day,
Unwearied,praising Him alway;
Him,I,too,laud in every song,
To whom all thanks and praise belong."**

And often,too,at the close of day,"when ev'ning's pallid veil curtained the clouds with beauty or the moon a mild entrancement from her beams inspired, did Luther hymn the golden hours to rest with deep-toned chants and melodies divine; where voice and lute each other's echo seemed,so richly one their combination grew"(R.Montgomery:"Luther"). The testimony of Johan Walther, the outstanding musician of Wittenberg at the time of the Reformation, should not be omitted. Said he:"It is my certain knowledge that Luther took great delight in music,both in choral and figural composition... I spent hours with him in oral singing." **

These paragraphs may suffice to show Luther's ingrained love for both vocal and instrumental music. We may now direct our attention to his efforts in the field of hymnody,and the resultant productions.

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* C.Winkworth: Christian Singers,p.1
** Quoted from Notes on hymnological lectures by Prof.W.G.Polack.

Dr.Berhard Pick,an eminent authority on Luther's hymns,makes this thought-provoking remark:"Luther's songs are history,and the history of the Reformation cannot be understood without them."* It is advisable, therefore,that we review the fundamental priciples of this blessed movement. For the sake of brevity we may quote the church historian,Qualben, who lists the following:"(1) Man is justified by faith alone and not by works. (2) Consequently,there is a general priesthood of all believers; that is,God is accessible to every Christian without the mediation of a priest or of the church. (3) The Bible is the only source and standard for faith and life. (4) The Bible must be interpreted by the aid of the Holy Spirit."** Of particular interest here is the second principle mentioned,for the backbone of the Reformation was the restoration of the divine order of the universal priesthood of all believers on the basis of I Pet. 2,9. Through the grace of God and Luther's efforts the old barrier between "clerus et laicus" was broken down,and the common man came again into his own. It was the Reformer's urgent desire "that the Word should have free course among Christians." With this objective in view,Luther translated the Holy Scriptures into the language of his people,making Oriental thoughts and illustrations understandable to their minds. In doing so,he gave Germany a unified language,the modern High German. As Jacob Grimm said:"Luther has made use of his mother tongue with such force, purity and beauty,that his style,from its powerful influence on our whole language,must be considered to have been the germ and laid the basis of the modern High German Language from which,up to the present day,but few deviations have taken place,and those mostly to the detriment of its force and expressiveness."***

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* Luther As A Hymnist,p.5
** A History of the Christian Church,pp.216-217
*** Quoted in Lambert's "Luther's Hymns",p.12

But Luther was likewise desirous that his people "should show forth the praises" of Him who had called them out of the dark realms of the devil's captivity into "His marvelous light," and had lifted up their eyes to the better country. He covated for his people the right to participate in congregational worship. This participation was principally singing with his fellowmen the songs of Zion*,necessitating not only a departure from the Latin Order of Worship,but from the Gregorian modes as well. Luther brought about both,as we shall see. A quotation from Julian,the master hymnologist,may well serve as a summary to this section,and as a transition to the next:"To Luther belongs the extraordinary merit of having given to the German people in their own tongue the Bible,the Catechism and the hymnbook,so that God might speak to them directly in His word,and that they might directly answer Him in their songs."**

Already as early as 1520 Luther had uttered the wish,"Would to God that we Germans read the Mass in German!" Only the fear that the Latin might fall into disuse made him reluctant. Five years later,however,on Christmas Day,German services were held in the castle church at Wittenberg. What is more,the afore-mentioned hope was realized,for in the meantime there appeared his groundbreaking "Deutsche Messe und Ordnung des Gottesdienstes",in which the scheme of the Mass has been retained,though thoroughly purged from papistic abuses. The preaching of the Word of God was again

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* Julian,Dictionary,p.414:"The Reformation of the sixteenth century taught or revived the primitive idea of the general priesthood of all believers, and introduced the language of the people into public worship. It substituted a vernacular sermon for the Latin Mass,and congregational singing for the chanting of priests and choirs."

** Ibid.,p.414 In this connection we would also cite part of a striking passage by H.Heine,originally published in the Revue des Deux Mondes, March 1834,and translated by Michelet in his Life of Luther:"Not less remarkable,not less significant than his prose works,are Luther's poems, those stirring songs which,as it were,escaped from him in the very midst of his combats and his necessities like a flower making its way from between rough stones,or a moonbeam gleaming amid dark clouds."

given the central and dominating place because,as Luther says in the prefatory paragrpph of this German Mass,"the preaching of the Word of God is the greatest and most exalted part of the worship; we thus esteem highly preaching and reading"(X,235). The Lord's Supper was again observed according to Christ's institution,where formerly it had been offered as an unbloody sacrifice by priests who spoke in a foreign tongue. Let it be noted right here that Luther did not rule out Latin altogether,but he did insist that side by side there should be German. The Gospel was to be proclaimed in the vernacular ,and the hearers were to give voice to the sentiments in the heart through vehicles in the vernacular. The Reformer,indeed,had a profound appreciation for the Latin hymnody of the Church,and was not averse to its employment where the language was understood. But here lay the crux vexissimus: by far the great majority were unacquainted with the Latin; there was a real need for vernacular hymns.

And now who was to supply that need? Luther? But this was 1523, and the Reformer was then in his fortieth year. It is a proven fact that anyone who first begins to pen poetry at this age rarely meets with any appreciable degree of success. One must begin to exercise himself in this art early in life,and with due regard for the admonition:"Nulla dies sine linea." What then caused Luther to write hymns at this age? We know that when he first thought of compiling a hymnbook,he did not intend to write himself the hymns that it should contain — that he would leave to others more gifted in the art than he.

However,there was an incident which caused him to break forth into song and sacred poetry just at this time: the martyrdom of two young men at Brussels* in 1523. The Reformation had spread rapidly and was accorded a joyous welcome,also by the liberty-loving,industrious people of the

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* There are some historians who maintain the martyrdom occurred at Antwerp.

Low Countries. Nevertheless,the antagonism between the adherents of Reformed teaching and Romanists was very severe. The intolerant Emperor Charles V issued edicts of increasing severity against the "heretics", while Roman Catholic authorities took extreme measures and employed the Inquisition. At Antwerp was located a famous Augustinian monastery; Luther belonged to such an order,we remember. Here the prior and two young monks were particularly zealous in advancing the Reformation.All three were imprisoned as a result,and the aged prior was choked to death in his cell. The two young monks,Henry Voes and John Esch,were given a chance to recant,but when they refused they were burned to death at the stake,July 2,1523,thus becoming the first Lutheran martyrs.* Luther,of course,was deeply touched on hearing this sad news. It caused him to compose a poem in ballad form,dedicated to their memory. The poem began:

"Ein neues Lied wir heben an."

Richard Massie has given a translation of the ballad which must be included here:

By help of God I fain would tell
A new and wondrous story,
And sing a marvel that befell
To His great praise and glory.
At Brussels in the Netherlands
He hath His banner lifted,
To show His wonders by the hands
Of two youths,highly gifted
With rich and heavenly graces.

One of these youths was called John
And Henry was the other;
Rich in the grace of God was one,
And Christian true his brother.
For God's dear Word they shed their blood,
And from the world departed
Like bold and pious men of God;
Faithful and lionhearted,
They won the crown of martyrs.

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* So Qualben,A History of the Christian Church,p.299; Notes on lectures in Church History by Prof. Theodore Hoyer.

The old Arch-fiend did them immure,
To terrify them seeking;
They bade them God's dear Word abjure,
And fain would stop their speaking.
From Louvain many Sophists came,
Deep versed in human learning,
God's Spirit foiled them at their game,
Their pride to folly turning.
They could not but be losers.

They spake them fair, they spake them foul,
Their sharp devices trying.
Like rocks stood firm each brave young soul
The Sophists' art defying.
The enemy waxed fierce in hate,
And for their life-blood thirsted;
He fumed and chafed that one so great
Should by two babes be worsted,
And straightway sought to burn them.

Their monkish garb from them they take
And gown of ordination;
The youths a cheerful Amen spake,
And showed no hesitation.
They thanked their God that by His aid
They now had been denuded
Of Satan's mock and masquerade,
Whereby he had deluded th
The world with false pretences.

Thus by the power of God they were
True priests of God's own making,
Who offered up themselves e'en there,
Christ's holy orders taking;
Dead to the world, they cast aside
Hypocrisy's sour leaven,
That penitent and justified
They might go clean to heaven,
And leave all monkish follies.

They then were told that they must read
A note which was dictated; /creed.
They straightway wrote their faith and
And not one jot abated.
Now mark their heresy! "We must
In God be firm believers;
In mortal man not put our trust,
For they are all deceivers;"
For this they must be burned!

Two fires were lit; the youths were
But all were seized with wonder /brought.
To see them set the flames at naught,
And stood as struck with thunder.
With joy they came in sight of all,
And sang aloud God's praises;
The Sophists' courage waxed small
Before such wondrous traces
Of God's almighty finger.

The scandal they repent and would
Right gladly gloss it over;
They dare not boast their deeds of blood,
But seek the stain to cover.
They feel the shame within their breast,
And charge therewith each other;
But now the Spirit can not rest,
For Abel 'gainst his brother
Doth cry aloud for vengeance.

Their ashes will not rest; world-wide
They fly through every nation.
No cave, no grave, no turn nor tide
Can hide th' abomination.
The voices which with cruel hands
They put to silence living,
Are heard, though dead, throughout all
Their testimony giving. /lands
And loud hosannas singing.

From lies to lies they still proceed,
And feign forthwith a story
To color o'er the murderous deed;
Their conscience pricks them sorely.
These saints of God eßen after death
They slandered, and asserted
The youths had with their latest breath
Confessed and been converted,
Their heresy renouncing.

Then let them still go on and lie,
They can not win a blessing;
And let us thank God heartily,
His Word again possessing.
Summer is even at the door,
The winter now hath vanished,
The tender flowerlets spring once more,
And he, who winter banished,
Will send a happy summer. Amen.

Strangely enough,not the Lutheran,but the Methodist Hymnal has a hymn based upon it which it uses to the present day: #641.

Flung to the heedless winds,
Or on the waters cast,
The martyrs' ashes,watched,
Shall gathered be at last.

And from that scattered dust,
Around us and abroad,
Shall spring a plenteous seed
Of witnesses for God.

The Father hath received
Their latest,living breath,
And vain is Satan's boast
Of victory in death:

Still,still,though dead,they speak,
And,trumpet-tongued proclaim,
To many a wakening land,
The one availing name.

Tr. by John A. Messenger.

Luther's poem may be called the tiny spring from which the majestic river of Protestant Hymnody has sprung.

Now,as stated in a previous paragraph,Luther did not consider himself competent to compose hymns and psalms,and so he solicited the aid of others. This becomes evident from the following request,addressed to his friend Spalatin:

> "It is my intention after the example of the prophets and the ancient fathers,to make German psalms for the people; that is,spiritual songs,whereby the Word of God may be kept alive among them by singing. We seek,therefore,everywhere for poets. Now,as you are such a master of the German tongue,and are so mighty and eloquent therein,I entreat you to join hands with us in this work,and to turn one of the psalms into a hymn, according to the pattern (i.e. an attempt of my own) that I here send you. But I desire that all newfangled words from the Court should be left out; that the words might all be quite plain and common,such as the common people may understand,yet pure and skillfully handled; and next,that the meaning should be given purely and graciously,according to the sense of the psalm itself."*

These words are most wealthy in their suggestiveness with respect to the characteristics of the real church hymn,and warrant reference in a later paragraph. Another statement which shows Luther hoped others would follow his example is found in his own preface to the Spiritual Songs,published in 1527:"Accordingly,to make a good beginning,and to encourage

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* C.Winkworth: Christian Singers, p.107,seq.

others who can do it better,I have myself,with some others,put together a few hymns,in order to bring into full play the blessed Gospel,which by God's grace hath again risen."* Yet in spite of his repeated requests, "those others who can do it better" failed to produce anything,and so Luther continued the work himself. He who saw the need better than anyone, met it better than anyone.

In the Fall of 1523 Luther offered the people a slender little pamphlet which is given the honored first place of all hymnals produced by Lutherans and Protestants. This title appeared on the booklet: Etlich cristlich lider Lobgesang uñ Psalm.** It contained but eight hymns and is popularly known as the "Achtliederbuch". Of the eight hymns in this collection four were produced by Luther:

1) "Dear Christians one and all rejoice"
2) "Out of the depths I cry to Thee"
3) "O God from heaven look down and see"
4) "The mouth of fools doth God confess"

Then there were three by Paul Speratus,a friend of the Reformer,and one by an unknown author. This little book "flew all over Europe" in answer to the deep-felt want of a song-starved people. The new hymns,with the grand music to which they were set,were eagerly learned by the people. We hear of musicians playing them on blow horns from church steeples, and of crowds singing them on the market places.Almost immediately there arose a general cry for more. In 1524 we have a second collection containing 25 hymns,18 by Luther. It was published at Erfurt and was entitled: "Eyn Enchiridion oder Handbüchlein."*** In the same year Johann Walther,

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* Quoted in Josiah Miller's "Singers and Songs of the Church",p.43
** Julian:Dictionary,p.414;703
*** Some writers,such as J.F.Lambert,maintain that their investigations have shown that this collection preceded the Achtliederbuch.

together with Luther, issued a so-called Spiritual Hymnbook ("Geystliche Gesang Buchleyn") with the music in five-part harmony. It was comprised of 32 hymns, 24 of which were written by Luther. After 1524 Luther wrote only 12 more (making a total of 36 hymns), so that the greatest number were composed just as he was in the midst of the great and gigantic work of the Reformation. His example brought about the desired inspiration and acceleration of others in the production of sacred songs, and soon Germany became a "nest of singing birds".*

In preparing these hymnals for use in public worship, Luther had a fourfold objective in mind:

1) To give to the Church metrical versions of the Psalms and other portions of Holy Writ.

2) To translate and adapt Latin hymns.

3) To improve and spiritualize popular folksongs.

4) To write original hymns.

As we now proceed to the study of each hymn individually, we may group them under these four heads.

-: III :-

A. Metrical Versions of the Psalms

"The Book of Psalms is a vase of perfume broken on the steps of the Temple and shedding abroad its odors to the heart of humanity. The little Shepherd has become master of the sacred choirs of the universe. David is the Psalmist of eternity." --Lamartine.

In preparing sacred songs for the people, it was quite natural that the "Swan of Eisleben" should turn to the Psalter, the great hymn-book of the Old Testament. He felt constrained to translate the noblest Psalms

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* C.M.Rudin: Stories of Hymns We Love, p.6, "Within twenty years after the first hymnal was issued at least 117 collections of hymns by Luther and his associates had been printed. Protestant Germany became a veritable 'sea of song'."

of the royal harpist into the language of his people. He admired them greatly as the flower of sacred poetry which had developed into a magnificent and fragrant rose. It was Henry van Dyke who said:"The Psalms are inward,confessional,intense,outpourings of the quickened spirit, self-revelations of the heart." That must certainly also have been Luther's estimate as can be detected in these lines of a latter to Eobanus Hesse:"I confess myself to be one of those who are more influenced and delighted by poetry than by the most eloquent oration even of Cicero or Demosthenes. If I am thus affected by other subjects,you will believe how much more I am influenced by the Psalms. From my youth I have constantly studied them with much delight,and,blessed be God! not without considerable fruit. I will not speak of my gifts as preferable to those of others; but I glory in this that,for all the thrones and kingdoms of the world,I would not relinquish what I have gained by meditating upon the Psalms,through the blessings of the Holy Spirit..."*

Even the most casual study of Luther's hymns reveals that his use of the Psalms was not a slavish adherence to the original,nor did he attempt merely a metrical paraphrase. Such efforts were peculiar to the Reformed,and resulted in cumbersome versions,which lacked the addition of the New Testament interpretation. The Psalms offered him seed-thoughts of great and comforting truths,suggested simple pictures in which he might present that truth. The "Homer of Germany" realized that though the Psalms were written too soon for rhyme,they are,nevertheless,animated by a genuine poetic concept — are real "poems of the heart".

In comparing Luther's version of a Psalm with the original, it never impresses one as having been written when the Reformer was

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* Josiah Miller: Singers and Songs of the Church,p.42

humped over his Psalter,laboriously,tediously translating line after line. Not at all! These versions are not attempts at teaching a German to think and speak as a Hebrew; they are,on the contrary,successful endeavors at making the singing king of the Hebrews reproduce those sublime thoughts, those imaginative expressions of deep emotion,into simple,beautiful,understandible German. Luther has transformed "the sweet singer of Israel" into "the sweet singer of Germany!" The chief content of each Psalm has been woven into a real poetical masterpiece,a genuine classic. At the same time the New Testament view is skillfully and adroitly interwoven. These several characteristics must be kept in mind when one studied the following Psalm-versions of Luther.

1. Ach Gott,vom Himmel sieh darein

-: Psalm 12 :-

This hymn,evidently one of the first metrical compositions of a Psalm by Luther,was found both in the Achtliederbuch and Erfurst Enchiridion. Authorities,including Julian,agree that it was probably written in 1523. This hymn,with its companions,greatly furthered the glorious cause of the reformation. Its six stanzas contain a complaint against the false teachers and hypocrites who sorely afflict the Christian Church. Their craft and scorn are pictured,as well as the piteous condition of their hearts and lips,thoughts and words. God's might and power are described in contrast,however,and in comforting and beautiful terms. The hymn breathes the Christian assurance of God's help and the ultimate triumph over these enemies. Julian* quotes Bunsen's reference to it as "a cry for help from the church,founded on the Word of God for protection against its enemies and corrupters."

It is related that in 1527 the Council of Brunswick requested Dr. Sprengel of Magdeburg Cathedral,regarded as a learned and eloquent man,

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* Dictionary,p.9

to resist the doctrines of Luther,which were sweeping over the country like a mighty flood. His sermon from Beloved to Amen extolled,not God's grace in Christ,but the merit of Man's good work in securing salvation. One of the audience arose and differed with the Learned priest,stating his belief in salavation through faith alone. The priest had only begun to reaffirm the pagan doctrine of man's merit,when one began to sing this hymn. The whole congregation immediately joined in and the "good doctor" was forced to retire -- never again to return to Brunswick.

Of the several English translations of this hymn in common use that of Miss Cox is nearest the original,yet somehow lacking in smoothness. The free translation of William M. Reynolds,which appeared in 1849,is indisputably one of the best. The condensation of stanzas 2 and 3,as 2,is readily apparent. It is listed as #966 in HYMNS (General Synod; 70 Ed.,1857).

O God! look down from heaven,we pray,
Thy tenderness awaken!
Thy saints,so few,fast fade away---
Hast Thou Thy poor forsaken?
Thy Word no more is taught aright,
And faith from earth has vanished quite---
O Lord,our God,revive us!

From teachers of false doctrine,Lord,
Thy church,we pray,deliver,
They undertake to rule Thy Word,
As wiser than its giver.
Who shall control our tongues,they say,
Who dare prescribe another way,
Who hath dominion o'er us?

God therefore saith,"I will arise,
My poor they are oppressing,
I see their tears,I hear their cries,
Their wrongs shall have redressing.
My healing Word shall now appear,
The proud shall think its truths severe,
But it shall save the humble.

As silver sev'n times purified
Is known and prized the higher,
The Word of God,when fully tried,
Doth deeper love inspire:
The cross but proves its greater worth,
It shines abroad o'er all the earth,
Enlightening all nations.

O God,preserve it pure,we pray,
In this vile generation,
May we still walk its perfect way,
And see Thy full salvation;
Here may it make the simple wise,
And there beyond the glittering skies,
Fill ev'ry mouth with gladness.

2. Aus tiefer Noth schrei ich zu dir

-: Psalm 130 :-

De Profundis clamavi ad te Out of the depths I cry to Thee

Dr. Julian judges this great penitential hymn of Luther as one of "the finest of German Psalm versions." And rightly so. It was also one of his first hymns,appearing in the Achtliederbuch of 1523. In the letter to Spalatin,written early in 1524,referred to above,Luther mentions that he had already translated the De Profundis and begs him to assist in versifying Psalms for the people. Undoubtedly the majestic sweep of this Old Testament hymn so carried Luther away that he cast it into verse very soon after the translation had been completed,taking special pains with its versification.

And that special effort was richly rewarded,for the hymn has been appreciated and sung by succeeding generations,and still retains its popularity. After reading the first stanza one cannot escape the feeling that here,if ever,"deep calleth unto deep" -- the deep of mankind's misery to the deep of heavenly mercy. It is interesting to note that Luther considered the 130th Psalm as a "Pauline Psalm",emphasizing the sola gratia. The hymn on which it is based,naturally,emphasizes the same truth,and embodies the foundation upon which the Protestant Church is built: We can do nothing of ourselves; all depends upon the free grace of God. The Word alone can give the troubled,sin-ridden conscience assurance and peace.

The hymn has been translated many times and a goodly number of these English translations were accessible to the writer. But a study of these revealed that the version given in the present hymnal is superior in many respects. Worthy of note,however,is the translation of Benjamin Latrobe (stanza 4 is omitted) which is found in the Irish Church Hymnal (1883).

A revised translation of Miss Winkworth,found in the American Lutheran Hymnal,is submitted in this treatise: # 65

Out of the depths I cry to Thee;
Lord,hear me,I implore Thee.
Incline Thy gracious ear to me
As I appear before Thee.
If Thou remember each misdeed
And give to each his rightful meed,
Who can abide Thy presence?

Thy pardon,Lord,is gained through grace:
It can alone avail us.
Our works can ne'er our guilt efface,
The strictest life must fail us.
Before thee none can boast of aught;
To fear Thee we are rightly taught,
On grace alone depending.

My hope is,therefore in the Lord,
And not in mine own merit;
I rest upon His faithful word
To them of contrite spirit;
That He is merciful and just,
This is my comfort and my trust:
I wait for Him in patience.

And though I tarry till the night
And till the morn awaken,
My heart shall not mistrust His might
Nor count myself forsaken.
Do this,O ye of Israel's seed,
Ye of the Spirit born indeed,
Wait for your God's appearing.

Though great our sins and sore our woes,
His grace much more aboundeth;
His helping love no limit knows,
Out utmost need it soundeth.
Our Shepherd good and true is He,
Who will at last set Israel free
From all their sin and sorrow.

It was originally used as a Funeral Hymn,* Luther himself having included it in a collection of six which appeared in 1642. The hymn was sung by the congregation in the castle church in Wittenberg May 9,1525,at the funeral of the Elector Frederick the Wise. Later,in 1546,as the author's own funeral cortege moved through Halle it was sung with much emotion by the weeping multitude.

The doxology,added in 1525,by an unknown author,has been translated by Miss Winkworth as follows:

Praise to the Father,and the Son,
And Holy Spirit also,
As was at first and still shall be.
He doth His grace on us bestow.
Therewith we walk within His path,
That Satan's guile us cannot scathe.
Who this doth crave,saith: Amen.

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* Lambert: Luther's Hymns,p.52. So also Miller,p.44; Polack,II,26.

## 3. Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott

-: Psalm 46 :-

Deus refugium noster et virtus — A Mighty Fortress is our God

This majestic hymn,a pen-picture of "Grand Rough Old Martin Luther"*,is truly the Reformer's masterpiece,and is unrivalled in all Protestant Hymnody. An endless mass of literature has been produced on this hymn,and countless tributes have been paid it. Heine refers to it as "the Marseillaise of the Reformation"; Frederick the Great called it "God Almighty's Grenadier March"; and Paine,"The Battle Hymn of the Reformation". Thomas Carlyle accorded the hymn,and indirectly its author, one of the finest tributes when he said:"There is something in it like the sound of Alpine avalanches,or the first murmur of earthquakes,in the very vastness of which dissonance a higher unison is revealed to us... It is evident that to this man all popes,cardinals,emperors,devils,all hosts and nations are weak,weak as the forest with all its strong trees might be to the smallest spark of electric fire." Thus one might continue quoting indefinitely the estimations and tributes of great men.We shall mention but two more,hoever,the first of which comes to us from the pen of D'Aubigné,the noted historian:"Luther,full of faith,revived the courage of his friends,by composing and singing with his fine voice that beautiful hymn,since become so famous,Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott. Never did soul that knew its own weakness,but which,looking to God,despised every fear,find such noble accents...** Koestlin,in his famous biography of Luther,writes:"This hymn is Luther in song.It is pitched in the very key of the man. Rugged and great,trustful in God, and confident,it was the trumpet call of the Reformation. This world has many sacred songs of tenderness and trust,but this song of Luther's is matchless in its warlike tone,its rugged strength,and its inspiring ring." This tribute is unquestionably "the last word"|***

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* Robert Browning,"The Twins"

** History of the Reformation,Ed.1847,p.453

*** S.Paine,p.585:"It is as rugged as he and full of faith

It is commonly conceded that Luther used Ps.46 only as a motto or theme,the imagery and thought being entirely original.* The opinion that "it is not a psalm-hymn for purposes of worship,but a free creation,anoriginal expression of Luther's personality," is untenable.** Its very popularity and usage throughout Christendom silences such harsh criticism.

Because of the importance of this hymn,because it is the hymn of Luther,it is deserving of special study. We may then concern ourselves about the year in which Luther penned this "everlasting lyric".

"A Mighty Fortress is our God!"

What an appropriate prefatory sentence,which,once heard,entrenches itself securely in the soul. As Luther substituted "A Mighty Fortress" for the expression "refuge and strength",found in the Psalm,without a doubt there flitted before his mind's eye a picture of the Elector's forest-citadel,the Wartburg,towering 578 feet into the clouds,and only a short distance removed from Eisenach,"his beloved city". Clearly there rose a vision of her crenelated ramparts,her menacing donjon,her well-stocked arsenal,her well-trained knights and servants which had insured his safety from May 4,1521 to March 1,1522. "A Mighty Fortress is our God!" In this declaration we also learn the identity of those persons who are able to sing this sing,who can claim it as their own: Luther,and those who,like him,have cast aside all thoughts of work righteousness, who by grace through faith in the Christ of God have become His children, and who can thus call Him their God in truth.Children of this world,

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* Prof. E.Chr.Achelis:Luther's Hymns,in the Luth. Church Rev.,Oct.,1906.
** W.Nelle: Gesch. d. deut. ev. Kirchenl.,p.26:"Da ist von Psalm 46 nur Ausgangspunkt und Grundstimmung genommen. Sonst ist das Lied ganz frei gedichtet. Wenigen Dichtern der Welt ist es vergönnt gewesen,ihr tiefstes Innere,das Geheimnis ihrer Persönlichkeit,das Auszeichende ihres Charakters so in einen Gedichte voll und klar darzustellen,wie Luther es ungewollt in diesem getan hat. Man kann ihn nicht treffender kennzeichnen, als mit diesem Liede."

adherents of false doctrine,people who oppose Luther in the cardinal teachings of Christianity and who will not accept the confessional contents of this hymn,praise it,nevertheless,and sing it even though they have no right to do so. They do not grasp its real meaning so long as they disregard the Truth of God.

Our God---"a Mighty Fortress." In what respect is He this? The first two verses contain the answer: because He remains the Great Defender (v.1) and Protector of His Church (v.2).

-:A:-

Stanza One

God brings it about that the onslaughts of the old evil foe are completely repulsed. There is continual and terrible struggle between the Prince of Darkness and Christendom. But in this battle the Lord is a reliable,trusty Shield,in the compas of which Christians find safety,and also a dependable Weapon for warding off the thrusts of the enemy.* He helps us free,that is,He assists us entirely untroubled by the might of the Devil, from every need that hath us,the champion of Scriptural Truth,now in the period between 1517 to 1529,d'arteken. The "now" of the text must not be conceived of as referring to the momentary distress of a certain year,or part of a year,but it refers rather to any time as is proven by the fact that Luther sang the hymn throughout his later life as the expression of his personal trust without finding the "now" objectionable or untimely.

It is the old evil Foe,the devil,"a murderer from the beginning," who plagues the Church of Jesus Christ. The term used here by Luther to describe Satan was commonly employed long before Luther's time. Already at the beginning of the 9th century the devil is referred to as the altfiant,"old enemy",in a gloomy,Old German poem,describing the Last Judgment,and captioned "Muspilli".He is the arch-enemy,the original

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* For Luther's use of "Waffe" consult the poem Roland Schildträger.

foe of the Church. Luther then continues: this enemy at the present time has in mind to attack us in battle. He now means deadly woe. The original "Ernst" is equivalent to "combat,battle",as otherwise in Luther's writings, for example,when he speaks of good soldiers "who were often engaged in combat"(die oft bei dem Ernst gewesen sind). This meaning is still retained in the German idion:"Jetzt wird's blutiger Ernst." The devil is most belligerent and pugnacious over against those who acknowledge the Lord.And he thinks not only of the battle itself,but he anticipates a successful outcome,and,therefore,he attacks with force and cunning. In truth, he means (intends) deadly woe. Satan is personally powerful---a power we often underestimate or fail to recognize---and,what is more,his name is Legion,for as he himself says,"we are many",Mark 5,9. Countless powers await his beck and call. Great craft and subtilty plot the program by which he would induce men to sin. Cf.Eph.6,10-12. Decked in such armor--- a ghastly sight which one views with terror and horror alike---this sinister Black Knight bears down upon us. On earth is not his equal,his likeness,his match. He is possessed of more than human strength,he is not flesh and blood. A spiritual enemy he is,invincible and overpowering.How can we hope to withstand his attacks,to hold our ground? It is impossible, and so we flee. Yes,we flee -- but unto God,our "Mighty Fortress," from which the enemy must slink away in disgraceful defeat.

Stanza Two

God is also a "Mighty Fortress",a "Bulwark never failing," because He sends Christ who battles in our behalf,brandishing a victorious sword,and under whom we enter into combat and gain the victory. With might of ours can naught be done,indeed.There are pre-requisites for a successful issue: Christ,and a recognition of our own wretchedness,our total incapability. Who,living at that time,would have dared to wager that the timid hammerblows of this monk would become the sign and signal of a new

victorious attack upon the mailed enemy and the devastating array of his host? What kind of a match was this Augustinian friar with his emaciated body,together with his pitifully small circle of friends---what kind of a match was he for such prominent,educated,wealthy,and influential opponents: Emperor,princes,pope,cardinals,bishops,abbots,priors,priests,and provosts? And we today,who strive to continue the blessed work begun by Luther,what are we in contrast to the powers of darkness which to this very hour,in newer,more clever disguise,secretly and openly war against God's deathless Word? Ah,soon were our loss affected,for we are nothing of ourselves,there is nothing in us which would have impelled us even to accept this Word of Truth!

But,praise be to God,who has called us unto Himself,who kindles and keeps alive in us faith in His Word,and who leads us from victory to victory! He knows our inability to cope with the enemy,He recognizes our weakness,He "remembers that we are dust." Christians also realize these things; but we need not despair,you and I. And the reason? For us fights the Valiant One Whom God Himself elected (more literal:"There fights for us the Proper(rechte) Onanby God Himself selected"---J.Swartz,1879).And now,ask ye who is this?(better: "ask you 'Who is He?'—Anonym.),who is this proper,capable Man whom God has dispatched to the battle field? Jesus Christ it is,the Savior,the One anointed by God. He was elected by the heavenly Father,who Himself testifies:"Behold,my servant,whom I have chosen; my beloved,in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles," Matt.12,18. He,the Lord of all men,is also of Sabaoth Lord ( Is.1,9: יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת ),the Prince of the myriads of heavenly hosts,the Lord of the innumerable legions of visible and invisible creatures which,without exception,are created and preserved by Him,

and which also,without exception,must serve the best interests of His Church according to the divine will.

And there's none other God than Jesus Christ,say what men will,reject Him though they may! Many fault Luther for this line,saying it gives the second Person of the Trinity undue pre-eminence. Yet Paul's word,I Cor.8,6,justifies this statement:"But to us there bitbut one God, the Father,of whom are all things,and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things,and we by him." Similar definitives such as "no other","alone","none else"----referred to one of the three Persons in the Divine Essence---do not place one of the Persons of the Godhead in opposition to the others,but in opposition to all outside the Divine Being, including,therefore,all creatures. We read in Matt.11,27:"...no man knoweth the Son,but the Father;neither knoweth any man the Father,save theS Son"; this does not mean the Holy Ghost does not know bothtthe Father and the Son,for "the Spirit searcheth all things,yea,the deep things of God (die Tiefen der Gottheit)",I Cor.2,10.

Because,then,the Savior,elected and sent by the Father,is true God,He holds the field forever. The enemies of the Church have never and can never have the slightest hope of a successful issue in the warfare against the Church of Jesus Christ.

-:B:-

Now we come to the second major devision of the hymn. There we find answered this question: What follows upon the irrefutable fact that our God is a Mighty Fortress? It makes the true members of Christ's Kingdom entirely fearless in the midst of the greatest dangers (v.3) and fills them with the conviction that the Kingdom shall remain though all else shall "crumble into ruin and moulder in dust away," (v.4).

Stanza Three

In God we have a refuge! The knowledge of this blessed truth must kindle in our hearts firm faith in our ultimate triumph even though the very gates of hell threaten to rise up against us. It is because of this truth that the Reformer sings:

"Though devils all the world should fill,
All eager to devour us,
We tremble not,we fear no ill,
They shall not overpower us."

Who does not,on hearing these heroic lines,think of the Words Luther addressed to Spalatin when the latter expressed fear for his safety. The promise of God and His Christ to battle in our behalf elicits the same joyous assertion from us: Though this whole world were filled with devils, who seek to "wolf us down",still we tremble not,we fear no ill. The words "nicht so sehr" are spoken sarcastically,ironically,and are to be equated with the expression "not at all!" Confidence prompts this mockery,the confidence itself not prompted by disregard of the power and craft of the enemy,but rather by a recognition of far greater Might and Wisdom,coupled with love and grace and goodness. We are wholly convinced that it is the plan and counsel of God that we shall emerge the victors in all spiritual struggles.

The opponent is this world's prince.Thus he is referred to in John 12,31;14,30; not as though he possessed the power to do as he well pleases on earth---he must even ask Jesus' permission to enter into the swine! Matt.8,31---but he is the prince of this world because he arrogates unto himself such power (Matt.4,9),and because he finds in this wicked world obedience which is rightfully due to God alone. And yet, though fearful he may be,though he still scowl fierce as he will,though

bitter and bloodthirsty he show himself,he can harm us none. The small particle "none" (not at all),a translation of the original "nichts",has called forth a diversity of opinion on the part of scholars. Many take it in this sense: He harms us not so badly as he intends. Etymologically considered,it is an old High German combination of the negative ni and the Gothic neuter substantive vaiht,which means "thing": niwikt = no thing,not something,nothing,not at all. Thus the word "nicht" is used in the middle High German literature,and thus it is often employed by Luther, for example,in the Bible of 1545:"Es ist zu nicht hinfort nütze,denn das man es hin aus schütte"; in one of his writings:"...gegen welche Ehre aller Welt Ehre ein lauter Nicht (nothing) ist"; in one of his letters: "...da wird nicht aus".

In spite of all the fierce attacks of Satan he can harm us none,because he's judged,John 16,11. The Redeemer crushed his might while on the cross; henceforth the devil can accuse no one,but those who of their own will obey him,who subject themselves to the sway of his scepter. One little word can fell him! "One" has the emphatic position: one single little word. It is of no purpose to speculate which word Luther had in mind. Kunze,because of an incorrect understanding of the third paragraph of Luther's treatise "Wider Hans Wurst",thinks the Reformer had in mind the expression:"Du leugst!" Tschackert supposes the word, which brings about Satan's fall,to be"erkennen!" Yet is is clear that Luther's intended meaning is: Any little Word of Holy Writ,though it appears to be an inefficacious medium,which comes to the Christian at any place and at any time,a single Bible passage either short or long,as "Get thee behind me,Satan!"[2]; or even the pithy,ejaculatory prayer-word coming from the believing heart,as "Lord,help me!" or "Jesus!" is able to bring this mailed monster of iniquity to his knees,even as David's pebble felled Goliath.

Stanza Four

Because of this,our assurance that the Kingdom of God shall abide,though all else pass away,is made doubly sure. The Word they still shall let remain. The real strength of this line becomes manifest only upon consideration of the pure,High German original "schtahn". That the enemies of God shall allow the Word to remain is not merely a desire,not merely a command (sie sollen),not wishful thinking on our part. Not at all! We have the firm conviction that the Word of God,the Gospel of His grace in Christ,in brief,every word of Holy Writ in its pristine purity, yea,every "jot and tittle",shall stand in spite of all attempts to alter the meaning,in spite of all papal interpretation,in spite of the opinions of prelates.

That Satan and all his hellish horde,plus those here on earth who serve him,must let this Word remain,disconcerts them. It "goes against their grain",it grieves them,it happens contrary to their will. And not a thank have for it--- thus most English translations read. We may say immediately that Dr.P.E.Kretzmann most closely approaches the original when he translates:"They cannot work their pleasure." Scholars have carried on heated discussions over the real meaning of this difficult line. Shall one take the word "thanks" (Dank) in the sense of "will" (Willen) and read: "The Word they shall let remain without their desire or wish, whether they want to do so or not; we will not allow them liberty in the matter?" It is thus that Luther frequently employs the word "thanks" (Dank) in his writings,and apparently in this sense the line was understood immediately after Luther's death. This view,furthermore,is substantiated by subsequent Latin translations.* Such usage of the word "thanks"

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* Wolfgang Ammon,1579,translates:

Parum sinant verbum Dei
Nolint velintve quique.

And Valentine Cremcovius:

Nobis furor verbum Dei
Nolit,velit,relinquat.

Similarly J.Sleidan in the year 1555.

(Dank) has remained in idiomatic German: gegen,ohne jemandes Dank (Absicht, Willen),einem etwas zu Danke (wie er es denkt,wünscht,haben will) machen. The free rendition of this line by John Cochlaeus in a treatise of the year 1529 is also relevant here: ac ne gratiam quidem eo nomine (in dieser Hinsicht,in this respect) ullum ne inibit. Such is the intended meaning of "thank" (Dank) in this instance,as is now generally conceded.

The verse continues: He's by our side upon the plain,the battlefield,there where we fight the good fight of faith,and He aids us with His good gifts and Spirit,namely,with the Word and sacraments,which encourage and strengthen us. Therefore,though they,Satan and his minions,take our life,mankind's most precious possession (Cf.Job 2,4),goods,fame,child and wife,even those blessings which are the object of man's tenderest affections,they yet have nothing won,they derive no benefit,no advantage. We still possess the chief treasure,for the Kingdom ours remaineth.We are subjects of the King of kings,and members of His church. That is the promise of one who cannot lie:"I appoint unto you a kingdom,as my Father hath appointed unto me," Luke 22,29. (*)

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After such a study the inadequacy of Egglish translations becomes palpably evident. And there have been multitudes! The hymn has been translated into English alone at least 80 times. The one found in our hymnal is a composite translation,and comes close to the original ruggedness. Julian judges that of Thomas Carlyle,written in 1831,to be the best. Since that date,however,a number of translations have been made which surpass it. Among these,Dr. P.E.Kretzmann's ranks highest. He has

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* We have followed the scholarly treatment of "Ein' feste Burg" as found in "Unser Erbteil",pp.50-62. The writer was privileged to sit at the feet of the author,the renowned Prof.Wilhelm Schaller,while a student at St.Paul's College,Concordia,Mo.

caught the real spirit and proper meaning of the original,and reproduced it in most acceptable fashion in the English. His translation is found in the American Lutheran Hymnal (#487),Ed. 1930:

A mighty fortress is our Lord,
A sure defense to save us!
He frees us with His trusty sword
When trouble would enslave us.
The foe of all mankind
Great evil has designed;
His cruel weapons still
Are force and cunning skill;
On earth is not his equal.

With might of ours we cannot win,
Soon were our loss effected;
But with us in the battle's din
Is One whom God elected.
Ask ye,Who may this be?
The Lord of hosts is He;
Christ Jesus is His name,
True God from heav'n He came
In every strife to conquer.

Though devils all the world should fill,
All eager to devour us,
We tremble not,we fear no ill,
They shall not overpow'r us.
The prince of hell may still
Scowl fiercely as he will,
No harm to us is done,
He's judged,the fight is won;
A single word o'erthrows him.

The Word of God shall stand secure;
They cannot work their pleasure.
The Spirit,with His gifts so pure,
We have in fullest measure.
What though they take our life,
Goods,honor,child and wife,
Their hatred still is vain,
They have no lasting gain;
We still possess the kingdom.

The various dates assigned to this hymn are almost as numerous as the translations. Various authorities have dated it anywhere from 1521 to 1530 (a few even much earlier),and one is soon convinced that no one can set its date with a mathematical precision.

The most weighty opinions,however,insist upon the year 1527, and we may therefore safely accept this date.* The year marked the tenth anniversary of the posting of the Ninety-five Theses. Luther also wrote a letter at this time,the expressions of which may be considered strong intonations of the hymn rather than echoes. During this year the Reformer was also troubled with illness,and endured great spiritual conflicts---"a theologian sifted in Satan's sieve." News also reached him at this time that faithful confessors were put to death on account of their faith. What is more, the

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* W.Nelle: Gesch. d. deut. ev. Kirchenl.,p.36:"Erst das Jahr 1527 bringt uns wieder eins (ein Lied) von ihm,das Lied der Lieder 'Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott'. Denn es musz aus innern Gründen also so gut wie gewisz angesehen werden,dasz dieser Gesang um die Zeit des Allerheiligentages 1527,des zehnjährigen Gedenktages des Thesenanschlags,gedichtet ist."

dreaded plague had broken out in Wittenberg,all the faculty departing except Luther. It is said that his own home was converted into a temporary hospital. In the midst of these stormy blasts of life Luther fled to the Bulwark never-failing,and answered in notes of noble victoriousness.

An old writer has aptly remarked that "Whenever the Holy Ghost inspireth a new hymn,it is His wont to inspire someone with a good tune to fit it." In this case the inspiration for both the hymn and the tune was given to the same individual. And what a fitting tune it is! As Prof. W.Schaller remarks:"Sie macht ganz den Eindruck,dasz sie mit dem Text das Werk eines Gusses sei."* Set to one of the most splendid hymn-tunes ever written,it is not strange that Ein feste Burg has preserved its potent spell to the present day,and that its energetic strains have revived and inspired the most dejected hearts the world over. It "thunders at the very gate of heaven in its magnificent affirmation of belief."** Composers have incorporated its unforgettable strength in various compositions all the way from Hans Leo Hassler,and the great Johann Sebastian Bach,to Max Reger,the ultra-modern.

4. Es spricht der Unweisen Mund wohl

Dixit insipiens in corde suo Vain foolish men profanely boast

-: Psalm 14 :-

This hymn,listed by Jacobi under the caption "On True and False Christianity",is one of the earliest poetical productions from Luther's illustrious pen. It is found in the Achtliederbuch and was written expressly for public worship. The phraseology is quite cumbersome,and the poetic

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* Unser Erbteil,p.61
** New York Herold,1906; quoted in Prof.W.G.Polack's "Favorite Christian Hymns",I,p.11

worth is far inferior to later hymns. Julian lists it as one of those hymns "the reception of which into a hymnbook might be contested." As a commentary to this judgment one might add that its appearance in the new hymnal of the Missouri Synod is unlikely.

In stanza 1 the author shows that the very lives of depraved men deny their confessions of allegiance to the Almighty. In the next stanza Luther pictures God as bending from His throne on high and beholding all the sons of men. He searches their hearts to ascertain if there were any who truly sought to serve Him,who studied His Word,and who then bound themselves to His will and way. Stanza 3 shows that "they have all gone aside",have walked in their own sinful ways. The 4th inquires to what extent men,in dire need,refuse to call upon God, and how far they will follow paths hurtful to them. Stanza 5 explains the reason for human fear and restlessness; it contains a promise of divine assistance for the obedient. In the 6th and last stanza Luther explains that only through God's Son can heavenly mercy and assistance attend spiritual Israel.

The translation of Richard Massie is the most commonly used, and unquestionably superior to the few which are accessible. We would include one of five stanzas,however,found in the Psalmodia Germanica, p.84. All in all it is a good translation and is a fine example of early English translations of Luther's hymns:

Vain foolish Men profanely boast
Of God and true Religion: /Lust,
Their faithless hearts are full of
Their Life's a Contradiction:
Corrupted is their very Frame;
God's Holiness abhors the same;
There's None doth Good,but Evil.

The Lord,from his celestial Throne,
Look'd down on ev'ry Creature,
To find one Man who had begun
To love God's holy Nature;
But all the race was gone astray,
All had forsook the saving Way
Of Christ's bright Revelation.

How long will they be ignorant
Of their Abomination,
Who thus despise my Covenant,
Nor spare my holy Nation;
They never call upon the Lord,
But trust unto their golden Hoard,
And turn their own Defenders.

Yet are their Hearts in constant Pain,
And secret Fear and Trembling.
God with his Sion will remain,
Where Saints are still assembling;
But you deride the Poor's Advice,
Their greatest Comfort you despise,
That God's their only Refuge.

O,that the joyful Day would come
To change our mournful Station,
When God will bring his Children Home,
And finish our Salvation!
Then shall the Tribe of Jacob sing
And Judah praise their Lord and King,
With lasting Hallelujahs.

6. Es wollt uns Gott genädig sein

Deus misereatur nostri — May God bestow on us His grace

-: Psalm 67 :-

Someone has remarked that the 37 hymns of Luther form a complete hymnal,for he has penned a hymn for all the great feasts of Christendom,has versified her Creed and her great Cause. The longer one studies the hymnody of Luther,the more one is inclined to agree. In this instance the Reformer too the ancient 67th Psalm and versified it into one of the greatest missionary hymns ever written. The royal harpist of Israel was inspired to write this Psalm after a view of the broad fields of his kingdom,which were ripe unto the harvest. He petitions God to bless His Word abundantly in like manner,to give it free course and to prosper it.

In the first stanza of the hymn there is an earnest plea for the revelation of God's grace in Christ and the message of salvation in every clime and coast. The second stanza contains a beautiful expression of the greatful delight of peoples freed from sin and pastured upon the Word and Water of the Everlasting Life. In the third stanza Luther has expressed the praise of people redeemed by God for the countless blessings which they have experienced. Skillfully included is a reference to the Holy Trinity,making it a truly "complete" hymn. Lambert has aptly remarked:"Its form and contents are alike full of marrow,so that,in wealth

of thought and sentiment,it is excelled only by 'Ein feste Burg'."*

The hymn must be attributed to the year 1523,for it shared the honor of being included in the first Protestant hymnbook,the slender Achtliederbuch. It also appeared in "Weise,christliche Mess zu halten", by Luther,Wittenberg,1524,and also in the Enchiridion of the same year.

It is said that the heroic Swedish King,Gustavus Adolphus,and his hosts sang it,together with "Fear not O little flock,the foe" just before the battle of Lützen,Nov.6,1632.

Of the fourteen English translations,but two are in common use, and of the latter the translation in our present hymnal takes undisputed first place:

May God bestow on us His grace,
With blessings rich provide us,
And may the brightness of His face
To life eternal guide us;
That we His gracious work may know,
And what is His good pleasure,
And also to the heathen show
Christ's riches without measure,
And unto God convert them.

Thine,over all,shall be the praise
And thanks of every nation,
And all the world with joy shall raise
The voice of exultation;
For Thou shalt judge the earth,O Lord,
Nor suffer sin to flourish;
Thy people's pasture is Thy Word
Their souls to feed and nourish,
In righteous paths to lead them.

O let the people praise Thy worth,
In all good works increasing;
The land shall plenteous fruit bring forth
Thy Word is rich in blessing.
May God the Father,God the Son,
And God the Spirit bless us!
Let all the world praise Him alone,
Let solemn awe possess us.
Now let our hearts say,Amen.

6. WärGOtt nicht mit uns diese Zeit

Nisi quia dominus — Had God not come,may Israel say

*: Psalm 124 :-

This hymn,reflecting the hidden self and conscience of Luther,

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* Lambert: Luther's Hymns,p.35

is based upon the 124th Psalm which hymns God's delieverance in times of great distress. Therein lies the secret of its popularity during the 16th century,when the church was beset on every hand by enemies. It appeared first in the "Geystliche gesangk Buchleyn" of 1524,and was included by Luther among his revised hymns published in Wittenberg,1531.

The hymn pictures the delieverance of Israel from bondage under Pharaoh,their flight from Egypt,their successful crossing of the Red Sea and the seemingly insurmountable barriers which arose on every hand.Luther draws the parallel,and expresses gratitude to God for His eternal goodness, and trusts to His constant care in the future.

One tells that in the battle of Muehlberg the Elector,John Frederick,was taken captive by the imperial hosts and incarcerated. The Pastor of Saalfeld,Capper Aquila,visited this prince while he was in prison and endeavored to comfort him with this hymn,directing his attention to Daniel and St.Peter,whose release came in due time. Friends of the Elector exerted political pressure,and soon the Emperor was compelled to set him free. After his release on May 12,1552,he sang the entire hymn as a thank-offering to God.

The popularity of this hymn has waned,however,and many contest its inclusion in the hymnbooks. There have been comparatively few translations into English; the most acceptable is from the pen of Richard Massie:

Had God not come,may Israel say,
Had God not come to aid us,
Our enemies on that sad day
Would surely have dismayed us;
A remnant now,a handful small,
Held in contempt and scorn by all
Who cruelly oppress us.

Thanks be to God,who from the pit
Snatched us,when it was gaping;
Our souls,like birds that break the net,
To the blue skies escaping;
The snare is broken---we are free!
The Lord our helper praised be,
The God of earth and heaven.

Their furious wrath,did God permit,
Would surely have consumed us,
And in the deep and yawning pit
With life and limb entombed us;
Like men o'er whom dark waters roll,
The streams had gone e'en o'er our soul,
And mightily o'erwhelmed us.

7. Wohl dem,der in Gottes Furcht steht

Beati omnes qui timent Dominum  Happy the man who feareth God,Whose

-: Psalm 128 :-

This versification of the 128th Psalm may be called Luther's "Wedding Hymn",for it was frequently sung on such joyous occasions. As the Psalm on which it is based,the hymn describes a pious household and the blessings which rest upon it. One might refer to it as the portrait of a God-fearing man: 1) Faith,translated into a godly life; 2) the blessing of a faithful wife,and children as the fruit of mutual love; 3) Contentment and a happy end; 4) everlasting and abiding peace.

The hymn first appeared in the Enchiridion of 1524. Other than this,hymnologists have left nothing of importance concerning the hymn. Richard Massie's translation,1854,has not been surpassed by another which appeared in 1867. The four translations which preceeded these are too archaic to merit serious consideration. Massie's English version appears in an abbreviated form in our hymnal; the doxology was added later.

Happy the man who feareth God,
Whose feet His holy ways have trod;
Thine own good hand shall nourish thee,
And well and happy shalt thou be.

Lo! to that man these blessings cleave
Who in God's holy fear doth live;
From him the ancient curse has fled
By Adam's race inherited.

Out of Mount Zion God shall send
And crown with joy thy latter end,
That thou Jerusalem may'st see
In favour and prosperity.

He shall with thee be in thy ways
And give thee health and strength of days;
Yea,thou shalt children's children see,
And peace on Israel shall be.

Praise God the Father,God the Son,
And God the Spirit,Three in One;
As 'twas through ages heretofore,
Is now,and shall be evermore.

B. Translations from the Latin.

We have mentioned before that Luther had a high regard for the Latin hymnody,and did not desire that these gems should fall into disuse. Johann Walther,Capellmeister to the Elector of Bavaria,in a letter containing reminiscences of his illustrious friend,mentions for example,that Luther "gave orders to re-establish the Vespers,which in many places,hadd fallen into disuse,with short,plain choral hymns for students and boys; and that the charity-scholars,collecting their bread,should sing,from door to door,Latin hymns,anthems and responses,appropriate to the season.It did not please him to have the scholars sing nothing but German songs in the streets...He maintained that Latin songs are useful for the learned and for students..."*

However,the Reformer determined that unacquaintance with the Latin should never bar his "beloved Germans" from this treasury. So he translated some of the best of these into the vernacular. Sometimes he enlarged upon a well-known Latin sequence or antiphone,adding several verses of his own. Though no classification can be quite perfect,we may say that there are some eleven such translations among Luther's hymns.

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* Lambert: Luther's Hymns,p.11.

8. Christum wir sollen loben schon

A solis ortus cardine

One of the best known poems of the first half of the 5th century was the Paean Alphabeticus de Christo ("A triumphal song concerning Christ") arranged according to the letters of the alphabet. It is a devout description of the life of our blessed Lord in verse. The full text is still extant, but to suit ecclesiastical purposes it was later divided into two hymns. The first is known as A solis ortus cardine, and the second as Hostis Herodes impie. Luther translated both, giving to his people a Christmas and an Epiphany hymn of real merit.

The text of this portion of the poem (A solis ortus cardine) comprises 28 lines of the original (stanzas a to g inclusive). Lines 1-4 are commonly accepted as coming from the pen of Sedulius. The succeeding lines, 5-12, form the conclusion of the hymn for Epiphany, "Quicunque Christum quaeritis," by Prudentius. The lines 13-24, commencing with "Fit porta Christi pervia," are received by the Benedictine orders of St. Ambrose as a genuine work of that Father, on the authority of a treatise ascribed to St. Ildephonsus, "De perpetua Virginitas Beatae Mariae, et de ejus Parturitione." The authorship of the remaining lines is uncertain.

Several attempts had been made by poets to translate the hymn into German. Both John of Salzburg, and Henry of Laufenberg, for example, had tried their skill, but the results show that they had held too closely to the original Latin. Luther, however, excelled them by far. Thoroughly studying the text, he absorbed the thought of the Latin hymn, and then expressed its Christian truths in smooth and easy verse. We may list the content of each stanza thus:

1. Praise of Christ, the Holy Son of Mary.

2. The Incarnation of the Word for the sake of man's redemption.

3. The miraculous conception by the Holy Ghost.

4. The Virgin undefiled becomes the Temple of God.

5. The birth of Christ,whom John the Baptist acknowledged while yet in the womb.

6. The poverty of the Preserver of all things.

7. Praise songs of the heavenly hosts; announcement to the shepherds.

8. A wondrous doxology to the Trinity.

Luther's hymn first appeared in the Erfurt Enchiridion,1524; and in Koch,1524.

Of the translations in common use,that of Richard Massie is acknowledged to be superior. We present it in unabridged form. A comparison with the version in our hymnal (Ev.Luth. Mo.Synod,1927) shows stanza four has been omitted. Changes,though slight,occur in v.5,6 and 7.

Now praise we Christ,the Holy One,
The spotless Virgin Mary's Son,
Far as the blessed sun doth shine,
E'en to the world's remote confine.

He,who himself did all things make,
A servant's form vouchsafed to take,
That He as man mankind might win,
And save His creatures from their sin.

The grace of God,the Almighty Lord,
On the chaste mother was outpoured;
A virgin pure and undefiled
In wondrous wise conceived a child.

The holy maid became th' abode
And temple of the living God;
And she,who knew not man,was blest
With God'sownW Word made manifest.

The noble mother bare a Son,
For so did Gabriel's promise run,
Whom John confessed and leapt with joy,
Ere yet the mother knew her boy.

In a rude manger stretched on hay,
In poverty content he lay;
With milk was fed the Lord of all,
Who feeds the ravens when they call.

Th' angelic choirs rejoice,and raise
Their voice to God in songs of praise;
To humble shepherds is proclaimed
The Shepherd who the world hath framed.

Honor to thee,O Christ,be paid,
Pure offspring of the holy maid,
With Father and with Holy Ghost,
Till time in time's abyss be lost.

9. Der du bist drei in Einigkeit

O Lux beata Trinitas

The authorship of this gem of Latin hymnody is attributed to St.Ambrose of Milan. The original consists of the following two stanzas:

O Lux beata Trinitas,
Et principalis unitas;
Jam sol recedit igneus:
Infunde lumen cordibus.

Te mane laudent carmina,
Te deprecemur vespere,
Te nostra supplex gloria
Per cuncta laudet saecula.

Dr. Luther was impressed with this bit of verse, simple yet sublime, and translated it just three years before his death. It is one of his last hymns. The doxology which he appended to the two original stanzas makes of it a finished product, a Trinitarian hymn that has seldom been equalled:

Gott Vater dem sei ewig Ehr,
Gott Sohn, der ist der einig Herr,
Und dem Tröster, heiligen Geist,
Von nun an bis in Ewigkeit.

It was almost universally used at Vespers on Saturdays, as is indicated in the older Breviaries (Rome, Paris, Sarum, Aberdeen). Sometimes it was also assigned to Vespers on Trinity Sunday. The hymn appeared in Klug's book, Wittenberg, 1543; Babst, 1545; and in the Magdebugg edition of 1551.

The original text has been frequently translated into German, and through three of these has passed into English. Luther's version has been followed by at least eight translators. And again, Massie has given us the best version:

Thou who art three in unity,
True God from all eternity,
The sun is fading from our sight,
Shine thou on us with heavenly light.

We praise thee with the dawning day,
To thee at evening also pray;
With our poor songs we worship thee
Now, ever and eternally.

Let God the Father be adored,
And God the Son, the only Lord,
And equal adoration be,
Eternal Comforter, to thee.

Some doubt whether the change in the two last lines in our hymnal is really an improvement:

"And God the Holy Spirit be
Adored throughout eternity!"

The repetition of "adored" in a stanza of so few lines seems to weaken it. However, the change may be justified on the strength of the argument that the equality in Divine Essence of the Third Person is thus emphasized to a greater degree.

10. Jesus Christus unser Heiland, der von uns

Jesus Christus nostra

salus

This Catechism and Communion hymn is ascribed to the Bohemian Reformer, John Hus, and is included in the Monumentorum Joannis Hus altera pars, Nürnberg, 1558. Dr. John Julian, however, holds that "his authorship is at least doubtful." The first and last stanza of the hymn in the original, which contained a dogmatic explanation of the elements of the Lord's Supper, read:

JHesus Christus, nostra salus
quod reclamat omnis malus,
Nobis in sui memoriam
dedit in panis hostiam.

Caro cibus sanguis vinum
est misterium divinum:
Tibi sit laus et gloria
in seculorum secula.

Only the first stanza of Luther's hymn is taken directly from this Latin original; otherwise there is scarcely a thought in the remaining nine stanzas whose similarity may be traced to it.

The hymn first appeared in the Erfurt Enchiridion, 1524, and was entitled, "The Hymn of St. John Hus improved." But if Luther "improved" the hymn, he did so by superseding it! He offers and explanation of the significance and use of the Eucharist, and, therefore, the hymn helped to prepare the communicants for a worthy reception. Indeed, if one consults the Catechism and compares the paragraphs on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper with Luther's hymn, one may say it is essentially a versification of the former. Questions familiar to Lutheran Catechumens, though not included, are answered, such as these: Why was the Sacrament of the Altar instituted? (Ans. Stanza 1-2); Who then receives such Sacrament worthily? (Ans. 4-9).

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Julian

Luther also points out what the fruits of a worthy reception will be (v.10). The two last lines of the sixth stanza have occasioned much criticism. What did Luther mean to say? By way of answer we present that stanza together with the strong commentary offered by Rev. 3,17:

Solch' grosz' Gnad und Barmherzigkeit
Sucht ein Herz in groszer Arbeit( i.S. Bekümmernis).
Ist dir wohl,so bleib davon,
Dasz du nicht kriegest bösen Lohn!

Rev.3,17:"Because thou sayest,I am rich,and increased with goods,and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable,and poor,and blind,and naked..."

The improvement of the translation of Richard Massie,commonly acknowleded to be the best,is found in our hymnal (#441),though two stanzas have been omitted. The original,including these two stanzas,is herewith submitted:

Christ,who freed our souls from danger,
And hath turned away God's anger,
Suffered pains no tongue can tell,
Torredeem us from pains of hell.

That we never might forget it,
Take my flesh,he said,and eat it,
Hidden in this piece of bread,
Drink my blood in this wine,he said.

Whoso to this board repaireth,
Take good heed how he prepareth;
Death instead of life shall he
Find,who cometh unworthily.

Praise the Father,God in heaven,
Who such dainty food hath given,
And for misdeeds thou hast done,
Gave to die his beloved Son.

Trust God's Word; it is indended
For the sick who would be mended;
Those whose heavy-laden breast
Groan with sin and are seeking rest.

To such grace and mercy turneth
Every soul that truly mourneth;
Art thou well? Avoid this board,
Else thou reappest an ill reward.

Lo! he saith himself,"Ye weary,
Come to me and I will cheer ye";
Needless were the leech's skill
To the soul that be strong and well.

Couldst thou earn thine own salvation,
Useless were my death and passion;
Wilt thou thine own helper be?
No meet table is this for thee.

If thou this believest truly
And confession makest duly,
Thou a welcome guest art here,
This rich banquet thy soul shall cheer.

Sweet henceforth shall be thy labor,
Thou shalt truly love thy neighbor.
So shall he both taste and see
What thy Savior hath done for thee.

11. Komm Gott Schöpfer,heiliger Geist

Veni Creator Spiritus,

Mentes.

With the exception of the Te Deum,this great Pentecostal hymn enjoyed a greater popularity in the Western Church than any other. It has been ascribed to Charlemagne,St.Ambrose,Gregory the Great,and Rhabanus Maurus,but its authorship cannot be definietly determined. The earliest specific allusion to the hymn is that it was used at a synod at Rheims in 1049. Undoubtedly it arose sometime during the 9th century.

The internal worth of the hymn is our chief concern. "Except as a matter of literary history it is of little importance who the author is. The merit of the hymn lies in itself. Its comprehensiveness and brevity, its simplicity and beauty,its gentle spirit of trust and devotion,and its earnest directness of expression,mark it as the production of a great and practiced writer,and a devout Christian,studiously familiar with the Scriptures and theological truth,rather than a proud monarch and a great soldier."* In order to determine the original text,seven manuscripts,assigned to the 11th century,were consulted. The text,as found in these manuscripts,reads:

Veni Creator Spiritus,
Mentes tuorum visita,
Imple superna gratia
Quae Tu creasti pectora.

Qui Paraclitus diceris,
Donum Dei altissimi,
Fons vivus,ignis,charitas,
Et spiritalis unctio.

Tu septiformis munere,
Dextrae Dei Tu digitus,
Tu rite promisso Patris,
Sermone ditas guttura.

Accende lumen sensibus,
Infunde amorem cordibus,
Infirma nostri corporis
Virtute firmans perpeti.

Hostem repellas longius,
Pacemque dones protinus,
Doctore sic Te praevio
Vitemus omne noxium.

Per Te sciamus,da,Patrem,
Noscamus atque Filium,
Te utriusque Spiritum
Credamus omni tempore.

The most usual form in which the doxology appeared is:

Sit laus Patri cum Filio,
Sancto simul Paraclito,
Nobisque mittat Filius,
Charisma Sancti Spiritus.

* The estimate of Benedict,quoted in Lambert's "Luther's Hymns",p.67.

During the Middle Ages the use of this hymn was dignified by the burning of incense,the ringing of bells,special lights,the best vestments,etc. It was used in the Ordination Service in the 11th century,and still later,at the consecration of a priest,the laying of foundation stones of churches,the consecration of a church,and on other important occasions.

As an example of Latin poetry it ranks with the best. Toward the close of the 14th century it was translated into German by John of Salzburg, and by other scholars. Luther adhered most faithfully to the original Latin in his translation,transposing the third and fourth stanzas. The hymn first appeared in the Erfurt Enchiridion,and Walther's book,of 1524. It is interesting to note that the Romanist,John Leisenritt,included Luther's translation in his collection,1567! The identity of the translator,whose English version is herewith subjoined,is not at all certain. Some attribute it to L.W.Bacon.

Come,God Creator,Holy Ghost,
And visit thou these souls of men;
Fill them with graces as thou dost
Thy creatures make pure again.

For Comforter thy name we call,
Sweet gift of God most high above,
A holy unction to us all
O Fount of life,Fire of love.

Our minds illumine and refresh,
Deep in our hearts let love burn bright;
Thou knowest the weakness of our flesh;
And strengthen us with thy might.

Thou with thy wondrous sevenfold gifts
The finger art of God's right hand;
The Father's Word thou sendest swift
On tongues of fire to touch each land.

Drive far from us our wily foe;
Grant us thy blessed peace within,
That in thy footsteps we may go,
And shun the dark ways of sin.

Teach us the Father well to know,
Likewise his only Son,our Lord,
Thyself to us believing show,
Spirit of both,aye adored.

Praise to the Father,and the Son
Who from the dead is risen again;
Praise to the Comforter be done
Both now and ever. Amen.

12. Nun komm der Heidenheiland

Veni Redemptor gentium.

This hymn,as Dr.Schaff says,is "the best of the Ambrosian hymns"* (except the Te Deum,which is older) full of faith,rugged vigor,austere

* Schaff: Christ in Song,p.9; Cf.also J.C.Jacobi,Ps.Ger.,I,p.1.

simplicity,and bold contrast,but of objectionable taste in the third stanza, which,in the translation subjoined,is smoothed down. The hymn is plainly referred to by St.Augustine as the work of St.Ambrose (+397),and,by a council held in Rome,430,his authorship was definitely confirmed.

Sometimes a stanza is prefixed to the hymn,and reads:

Intende qui regis Israel
Super cherubin qui sedes,
Appare Ephraem,coram excita
Potentiam tuam,et veni.

This prefatory stanza is not by St.Ambrose,however. The lines are simply the Vulgate of the 70th Psalm.

In stanzas 1-3 the individual invites the Beautiful Savior,the Wondrous Redeemer,and pictures Him as the desire of all nations,Immanuel, the Word made flesh,the Virgin's Son and the Son of God. In stanzas 4-6 this Lord descends to make the atonement,and then returns to celestial glory to seal his triumph for fallen man. In stanza 7 the individuall is brought again to the manger,there to behold the rising Sun in the dawn of His chi dhood. The last stanza is a beautiful doxology.

The hymn first appeared in the Erfurt Enchiridion,1524,and also in Walther's book,of the same year. A consideration of the various translations leads one ultimately to a preference for that of W.M.Reynolds. This is not as close to the original,but "a strictly literal English version is hardly desireable for modern congregational use." Nor is the translation of the doxology appended,as to other English versions based on Luther's. But from the point of view of smoothness and beautiful expression,Reynold's translation ranks very high,and deserves to be included here:

Come,Thou Savior of our race,
Choicest gift of heav'nly grace!
O Thou blessed Virgin's Son,
Be Thy race on earth begun.

Not of mortal blood or birth
He descends from heaven to earth:
By the Holy Ghost conceived,
Truly man to be believed.

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Julian

Wondrous birth! O wondrous Child
Of the virgin,undefiled!
Though by all the world disowned,
Still to be in heav'n enthroned.*

From the Father forth He came,
And returneth to the same;
Captive leading death and hell,
High the song of triumph swell.

Equal to the Father now,
Though to dust Thou once didst bow;
Boundless shall Thy kingdom be;
When shall we its glories see?

Brightly doth Thy manger shine!
Glorious is its light divine;
Let not sin o'ercloud this light,
Ever be our faith thus bright.

13. Was fürchst du Feind Herodes sehr...

Hostis Herodes impie

This is Luther's Epiphany hymn,judged by Julian as unsuitable for inclusion in hymnbooks. It was written in the evening of Luther's life, Dec. 12,1541,and was based on the second part of the "Paean Alphabeticus de Christo," known as the "Hostis Herodes impie" in ecclesiastical terminology. It consists of the strophes commencing with the letters h,i,l,m,and s. Lambert remarks that "Luther,in 1520 already,treasured the Latin antecedent,'A solis ortus cardine,'"and that the last stanza of the hymn "Was fürchst du Feind Herodes sehr" "may be taken as a prelude to his Babylonian Captivity." Contemporaries of Luther,such as Avenarius,praised the hymn highly,and maintained even the most skillful poet of the time could not equal it. The contents,stanza by stanza,are as follows:

1. Surprise that Herod should fear the advent of the newborn King,since He sought no earthly kingdom.

2. Adoration of the Magi,led by "the light of that true Light."

3. The appearance of His Messianic dignity at His baptism.

4. The first miracle at Cana in Galilee.

5. A beautiful doxology.

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* Luther retaining the harsh features of the original:—

Alvus tumescit virginis,
Claustra pudoris permanent,
Vexilla virtutum micant,
Versatur in templo Deus,

translates thus:—

Der jungfrau leib schwanger ward,
Doch bleibt keuschheit rein bewahrt,
Leucht' hervor manch tugend schon,
Gott da war in seinem thron.

Luther's hymn was published in 1544 in Klug's "Geistliche Lieder." Other translators have offered Massie little competition, and his translation follows:-

Why, Herod, unrelenting foe,
Doth the Lord's coming grieve thee so?
He doth no earthly kingdom seek
Who brings His kingdom to the meek.

Led by the star, the wise men find
The Light that lightens all mankind;
The threefold presents that they bring
Declare Him God, and Man, and King.

In Jordan's sacred waters stood
The meek and heavenly Lamb of God,
And He who did no sin, thereby
Cleansed us from all iniquity,

And now a miracle was done:
Six waterpots stood there of stone;
Christ spake the word with power divine,
The water reddened into wine.

All honor unto Christ be paid,
Pure offspring of the holy maid,
With Father and with Holy Ghost,
Till time in endless time be lost.

14. Herr Gott, dich loben wir

Te Deum laudamus

The Te Deum is the most famous non-biblical hymn of the Occidental church, and one which Luther especially loved. It is truly a catholic hymn, adapted to profitable use by all Christendom and breathing a truly Christian spirit. The first ten lines existed in Greek already in the 3d century. Bishop Ambrose found it substantially complete in his time, and translated it into Latin, in which form it enjoyed the widest use. To enter upon an exhaustive discussion of the authorities, texts, titles, date and authorship, origin and intention, versions, liturgical uses, musical settings, etc., is far beyond the scope of this treatise. Such a detailed discussion would fill a small volume. We may add, however, that it was used before the reading of the Gospel lessons as a hymn for Sunday Matins.

As to the content of the Te Deum itself,its influence on worshippers,its general worth---no one has paid it a more splendid tribute in so few words as did Lambert:

> "He who plunges into the sublime depths of this hymn and sings heartily,with the assembled congregation,on high festivalsoccasions,must surely feel as if earth had been lifted up into the church on high,where triumphant songs of praise to God never cease. The mundane and celestial are combined in spirit, and the lowly of earth join the hosts of heaven in glorifying God. Special emphasis is laid upon the praises to the blessed Savior,for all his great love that moved him to redeem man;for his humility,his victory,and his glorification. Having seen and tasted the glory of the Lord,the humble worshipper,returning to himself,finds good cause for the petitions for grace and protection."*

Many German versions of the Te Deum have been made at various periods. Luther's free version of 52 lines is arranged for antiphonal singing,and is most painstakingly and accurately done. The Reformer apparently made his translation in 1528,for a letter to Crodelius leads one to that supposition. It appeared in both Walther's and Klug's book in 1529,and gain in 1535.

First Choir

Lord God,thy praise we sing;
Father in eternity,
Angels and heavenly host
Both Cherubim and Seraphim
Holy art Thou,our God!

Second Choir

Lord God,our thanks we bring;
All the world worships thee;
Of thy glory loudly boast;
Sing ever with loud voice this hymn:
Holy art thou,our God!

Both Choirs

Holy art thou,our God,the Lord of Sabaoth!

Thy majesty and Godly might
Fill the earth and all the realms of light

The twelve apostles join in song
Thy martyr's noble army raise
The universal Church doth thee

With the dear prophet's goodly throng,
Their voice to thee in hymns of praise,
Throughout the world confess to be

Thee,Father,on the highest throne,
Thee,Comforter,ev'n the Holy Ghost,
Thee,King of all glory,Christ,we own

Thy worthy,true and well-beloved Son,
Whereof she makes her constant boast.
Th' eternal Father's eternal Son.

To save mankind thou hast not,Lord,
Thou overcamest death's sharp sting,
At God's right hand thou sittest,clad
Thou shalt in glory come again,

The Virgin Mary's womb abhorred;
Believers unto heaven to bring;
In th' glory which the Father had;
To judge both dead and living men.

(cont.)

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* Luther's Hymns,p.118.

Thy servants help whom thou,O God,
Grant that we share the heav'nly rest
Help us,O Lord,from age to age,

Nourish and keep them by thy power,
Lord God,we praise thee,day by day,

Keep us this day,and at all times
For mercy only,Lord,we plead;
Show us thy mercy,Lord,as we

In thee,Lord,have we put our trust;

Hast ransomed with that precious blood;
With the happy saints eternally blest.
And bless thy chosen heritage.

And lift them up forevermore.
And sanctify thy name alway.

From secret sins and open crimes;
Be merciful to our great need.
Our steadfast trust repose in thee.

O never let our hope be lost!

A-M-E-N!

Massie's translation is indeed a happy one,and speaks most eloquently in its own behalf.

15. Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich

Da pacem,Domine

This antiphon for peace,of the 6th or 7th century,is ascribed by some to Gregory the Great. By a Bull of Pope Nicholas III,1279,it was ordered to be sung at every mass before the Agnus Dei.

"Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich" was prepared by Luther first in prose in 1527. During the uprisings of the Turks and many threatened massacres, Luther translated the stanza into a form suitable for Protestant worship,and so it appeared in Klug's book of 1529. In a few publications it appeared as the last stanza of the Reformer's "Erhalt uns Herr bei deinem Wort."

A second stanza of 5 lines,based upon I Tim.2,2,and the latter part of the prose collect,is appended. It was not composed by Luther,however. This stanza reads:

"Gib unserm Koenig und aller Obrigkeit
Fried und gut Regiment,
Das wir unter ihnen ein geruiges
und stilles Leben fuehren moegen
in aller Gottseligkeit und Ehrbarkeit. Amen.

In many districts of Germany Luther's stanza was sung immediately after the

the sermon. Of the six translations into English,Luther's version has been most faithfully inproduced by Richard Massie,and is found in his Spiritual Songs,p.68:

In these our days so perilous,
Lord,peace in mercy send us;
No God but Thou can fight for us,
No God but Thou defend us,
Our only God and Savior.

Grant our king and all in authority
Peace and a proficient rule;
That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life,
In all godliness and honesty.
Amen.

16. Wir glauben all an einen Gott...

Nicene Creed

This is Luther's versification of the Nicene Creed,designed for liturgical use,and known as the "groszer Glaube". Laine,however,supposes it to be an amplification of an ancient poem to which Hoffman of Fallersleben refers,and not a versification of the Credos of the Mass. The Wittenberg Order of Worship,1559,prescribes that after the Gospel is read the minister sings: "I believe in one God"; then the choir sings: "Almighty Father"; whereupon the congregation sings Luther's hymn.

It was first published in the Wittenberg hymnal of 1524. During the Reformation period it was generally sung after the sermon. This is also one of the hymns included among Luther's "Christliche Geang...zum Begrebnis", 1542. It was sung,for example,at the funeral of the Elector of Saxony,Frederick the Wise,May 9,1525.

This hymn is sung in the Chief Service in the Church of Sweden while the whole congregation stands. A refusal to stand and sing is tantamount to a denial of the faith.

Most of the better English translations are of uncertain authorship. The one included in our hymnal is superior in many respects.However, H.Brueckner has supplied us with an English version that surpasses them all.

(Amer. Luth. Hymnal,#60.)

We all believe in one true God,
Who created earth and heaven;
As Father He to us in love
Has the claim of children given;
In His goodness He would feed us,
Soul and body e'er sustaining;
Thro' all danger He would lead us,
We from Him all safety gaining;
He watches o'er us day and night
And all things rules with boundless might.

And we believe in Jesus Christ,
God's own Son,all pow'r possessing,
Who honor with the Father shares,
Fount of ev'ry grace and blessing.
Born of Mary,virgin mother,
By the working of the Spirit;
He became our elder Brother,
That we heaven might inherit;
Was crucified by sinful men
And raised by God to life again.

The Holy Ghost we also own,
Who,in highest heaven dwelling
With God the Father and the Son,
Comforts us beyond all telling.
In one spirit He unites us
Who as Christians here are living;
For our suff'rings He requites us,
Freely all our sins forgiving;
All flesh shall rise again and we
Eternal life in heav'n shall see.

17. Komm,heiliger Geist,Herre Gott

Veni,Sancte Spiritus

The first stanza is a translation of a Latin antiphon dating from the 11th century,which reads:"Veni Sancte Spiritus: reple tuorum corda fidelium,et tui amoris in eis ignem accende: Qui per diversitatem linguarum cunctarum gentes in unitate fidei congregasti. Alleluia. Alleluia." These lines were generally assigned to Robert,King of France,A.D.991,and are still sung in many dioceses in Germany on Sundays before High Mass. Bäumker cites the German as in the Crailsheim Schulordnung of 1480.

Luther altered this old German stanza and then added two more of his own composition. He maintained the Holy Spirit had inspired it,both as to its words and melody. That same gracious Spirit gave Luther the ability to improve it! One tells that it was sung by Leonard Kayser when at the stake at Passau,Aug.16,1527. Speaking in reference to this incident Luther, deeply touched,wrote:"O Lord God,that I might be worthy of such a confes-

sion and death. What am I? What am I doing? How ashamed I feel,when I read this account,that I have not been worthy of having suffered a similar fate long since. ----- Well,if it shall be so,them,let it be. Thy will be done."

The hymn appeared in the Erfurt Enchiridion,and Walther's book, of 1524 and 1525. The English version by Miss Winkworth is unquestionably the most excellent,and is found in an improved form in our hymnal (#257). The original translation is herewith subjoined:

Come,Holy Spirit,God and Lord!
Be all Thy graces now outpoured
On the believer's mind and soul
To strengthen,save,and make us whole.
Lord,by the brightness of Thy light,
Thou in the faith dost men unite
Of every land and every tongue:
This to Thy praise,O Lord,be sung.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Thou strong Defence,Thou holy Light,
Teach us to know our God aright,
And call Him Father from the heart:
The Word of life and truth impart:
That we may love not doctrines strange,
Nor e'er to other teachers range,
But Jesus for our Master own,
And put our trust in Him alone.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Thou sacred Ardor,Comfort sweet,
Help us to wait with ready feet
And willing heart at Thy command,
Nor trial fright us from Thy band.
Lord,make us ready with Thy powers:
Strengthen the flesh in weaker hours,
That as good warriors we may force
Through life and death to Thee our course!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

18. Mitten wir im Leben sind

Media vita in morte sumus

According to well established tradition this hymn is founded on an ancient antiphon,written by Notker of St.Gall,one of the five learned Benedictine monks by that name,who died in 912. The original has only one verse. Notker is said to have composed it while watching some workmen who were building a bridge at the peril of their lives at the Martinstobel,a gorge of the Goldbach on its course from St.Gall to the Lake of Constance.

Rambach says that by the middle of the 15th century it had come into universal use as a hymn of Prayer and Supplication in times of trouble,

was sung regularly at Compline on the eve of Laetare Sunday,and was used by the people as an incantation. Bässler adds that it was used as a war song by the priests who accompanied the hosts before and during battle; and that,on account of magical properties ascribed to it,its use was forbidden,except by permission of the bishop,at a synod held in Cologne in 1316. The refrain "Sancte Deus," founded on Is.6,3,is said to date from the 5th century. The original of this antiphon reads:

Media vita in morte sumus:
quem quaeremus adjutorem nisi te Domine,
qui pro peccatis nostris juste irasceris.
Sancte Deus: Sancte fortis: Sancte et misericors Salvator:
amarae morti ne tradas nos.

Translations into German,ante-dating Luther's,had come into use as early as the 15th century. Wackernagel gives one of these found in a manuscript at Munich. This stanza Luther took with alterations,added two stanzas,and published as a hymn,beginning "Mitten wir im Leben sind," in the Erfurt Enchiridion of 1524. It bears a closer relation to the Latin original than most of Luther's poems. Instead of the prevalent note of joy which characterizes other products from his pen,we have here strong resemblances to the Miserere of the Middle Aggs. It is the painful cry of a soul tormented by fear of the wrath of an irate God. And yet one feels running through the hymn and undercurrent of strong faith and hope in God's delieverance. Quite properly has it been called "A hymn of triumph over the grave,death,and hell." Julian remarks that "it still holds a foremost place among German hymns for the dying,and has comforted many in their last conflict." A dying pastor on hearing it read to him,said,"This is Luther's heroic poem" — his last words. The hymn is truly magnificent. The third stanza is especially vigorous,and every word of it is important.

Massie has given us the best translation of Luther's version:

Though in the midst of life we be,
Snares of death surround us;
Where shall we for succor flee,
Lest our foes confound us?
To Thee alone,our Saviour.
We mourn our grievous sin which hath
Stirr'd the fire of Thy fierce wrath.
Holy and gracious God!
Holy and mighty God!
Holy and all-merciful Savior!
Thou eternal God!
Save us,Lord,from sinking
In the deep and bitter flood.
Kyri' eleison.

Whilst in the midst of death we be,
Hell's grim jaws o'ertake us;
Who from such distress will free,
Who secure will make us?
Thou only,Lord,canst do it!
It moves Thy tender heart to see
Our great sin and misery.
Holy and gracious God!
Holy and mighty God!
Holy and all-merciful Saviour!
Thou eternal God!
Let not hell dismay us
With its deep and burning flood.
Kyri' eleison.

Into hell's fierce agony
Sin doth headlong drive us:
Where shall we for succor flee,
Who,O,who will hide us?
Thou only,blessed Saviour.
Thy precious blood was shed to win
Peace and pardon for our sin.
Holy and gracious God!
Holy and mighty God!
Holy and all-merciful Saviour!
Let us not,we pray,
From the true faith's comfort
Fall in our last need away.
Kyri' eleison.

C. Improvement and Spiritualization of the

Popular Hymns

The Reformer's versatility is also evidenced in his revision and ~~enlargement~~ enlargement of Pre-Reformation popular hymns. One might say he "reformed them", spiritualized these popular folksongs,and thus made them suitable for use in public worship. Some indeed fault Luther because of this,saying that he took the popular metre and tunes of his day and wrote religious words to them.But we must remember that no matter how popular the hymns were in that age (they too were tinged with sex!) they were not jazzy as the "current song-hits", that mad cacophany of sound. We dare add that even today one might take a tune like "Drink to me only with thine eyes",and,having set religious lines to it,use the same in public worship. Indeed,this has been done! There comes to mind the hymn "He's coming soon" which is sung to the melody,"Aloha".

19. Gelobet seist du Jesu Christ

All Praise,Lord Jesus Christ,

to Thee.

The earliest form in which the first stanza of this hymn has been found is in a manuscript,dated 1570,and reading:

Louet sistu ihu crist
dat du hute ghebaren bist
Von syner maghet. Dat ist war.
Des vrow sik alde himmelsche schar.
Kyrie Eleison.

It has been described by some authorities as being a Germanization of a Latin sequence of the 5th century by Gregory the Great. Others ascribe it to Notker Balbulus. From a study of the manuscript in the royal library at Copenhagen,scholars are led to believe it was most likely written in the district of Celle. The improtance and significance of the song lies in the fact that it was one of the very few popular wenacular songs used in the service of the Church before the Reformation. In the "Ordinarium inclitae ecclesiae Swerinensis," Rostock,1519,there is a rubric for the service for Christmas:"Populus vero Canticum vulgare: Gelavet systu Jesu Christ,tribus vicibus subjunget."*

Luther added six stanzas to this single Pre-Reformation stanza (each ending with Kyrieleis),and published them on broadsheets in Wittenberg. They were then included in the Erfurt Enchiridion,1524. Luther's hymn has been translated again and again,and is retained in hymnals to the present time. An ancient hymnologist,Schamelius,has captioned it:"Benefactions of the birth of Christ,sung through manifest paradoxes." The hymn seems to have been inspired by John 1,14. As the Word Eternal,the everlasting God-Word, was made flesh,so this hymn unites the most majestic with the lowliest,in a little child. Beautiful contrasts appear in amazing harmonies: Son of God—

* Hoffman von Fallersleben,Ed. 1861,p.194

child of man; the Great God---the little Babe; the light---blackest night; the realm of heaven---the vale of tears; poor---rich. We may add in passing that the popular melody adapted to this hymn dates back to the 15th century.

The translation by R.Massie,found in our hymnals (#147) is,perhaps,the best. One of the earliest English translations,that of J.C.Jacobi*, is herewith subjoined to afford a contrast:

Due praises to th' incarnate Love,
Manifested from above!
All Men and Angels now adore
What we,nor they have seen before.
Hallelujah!

The blessed Father's only Son
Chose a Manger for his Throne:
In the mean Vest of Flesh and Blood,
Was clothed God,th' eternal Good.
Hallelujah!

Who had the World at his Command,
Wants his Mother's swadling Band.
Th' Almighty Word was pleas'd to come
A helpless Infant from the Womb.
Hallelujah!

Th' eternal Splendor is in Sight;
Gives the World its saving Light;
And drives the Clouds of Sin away,
To make us children of the Day.
Hallelujah!

God's only Son,and equal God,
Took amongst us his Abode;
And open'd through this World of Strife,
A Way to everlasting Life.
Hallelujah!

In Poverty he came on Earth,
To enrich us by his Birth,
And make us Heirs of endless Bliss,
With all the darling Saints of his.
Hallelujah!

This all he did that he might prove
Unknown Wonders of his Love;
Then let us all unite to sing
Praise to our New-born God and King.
Hallelujah!

20. Gott der Vater wohn uns bei

God the Father,be our stay

The old Litany on which this hymn is based dates from the 15th century. Wackernagel quotes a form dating from 1422,beginning "Sancte Petrus, won uns bey." In Michael Vehe's Gesangbüchlein of 1537 it is entitled:"A Litany in the time of Processions upon St.Mark's Day and in Rogation Week." It consists of five stanzas of 12 lines,followed by a series of invocations of Patriarchs,Prophets,etc. The first three stanzas were retained by Luther, while those containing invocations to the sainst and Mary were wisely eliminated.

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* Psalmodia Germanica,Ed.1765,p.6

The hymn first appeared in the Geystliche Gesangk Buchleyn, Wittenberg,1524. The title given to it in the Erfust Enchiridion of 1526 reads:"The hymn 'Gott der vatter won uns bey,' improved and corrected." The hymn speedily became very popular,and was used at weddings,at the sick-bed,and in times of great peril. The Elector of Brandenburg,Joachim Frederick,sang it before his death on July 18,1608.

Most authorities acknowledge Massie's translation to be second to none.

God the Father,be our Stay
When hell's dread powers assail us;
Cleanse us from our sins,we pray,
Nor in our last hour fail us.
Kepp us from the Evil One,
Firm in the faith abiding,
In Christ,our Savior,hiding,
And heartily confiding.
Let us put God's armor on:
With all true Christians running
Our heavenly race and shunning
The devil's wiles and cunning.
Amen,Amen,this be done,
So sing we,Hallelujah!

Jesus Christ,be Thou our Stay
When hell's dread powers assail us;
Cleanse us from our sins,we pray,
Nor in our last hour fail us.
Keep us from the Evil One,
*Firm in the faith abiding,
And heartily confiding.
Let us put God's armor on:
With all true Christians running
Our heavenly race and shunning
The devil's wiles and cunning.
Amen,Amen,this be done,
So sing we,Hallelujah!
*In Christ,our Savior,hiding.

Holy Ghost,be Thou our Stay
When hell's dread powers assail us;
Cleanse us from our sins we pray,
Nor in our last hour fail us.
Keep us from the Evil One,
Firm in the faith abiding,
In Christ,our Savior,hiding,
And heartily confiding.
Let us put God's armor on:
With all true Christians running
Our heavenly race and shunning
The devil's wiles and cunning.
Amen,Amen,this be done,
So sing we,Hallelujah!

21. Gott sei gelobet und gebenedeiet

May God be praised henceforth and blest

forever.

This is Luther's beautiful post-Communion hymn that has so entrenched itself in the hearts of Lutherans in every age,and still remains

a general favorite. The first stanza dates from Pre-Reformation times, was used at processions,during the service of the Mass,and was sung by the people after the Epistle on Corpus Christi Day. Luther retained the first stanza,and then added two others. The melody is composed of joyous,comforting strains which the Roman congregation sang responsively with the choir.

Stanza 1-2 praise God,the Giver,who gave Himself as the Gift, His body and blood to all contrite and penitent sinners,and made peace with Himself and all mankind. The last stanza breathes the prayer that the Lord might bless the reception of His Supper unto the strengthening of faith,a godly life,and a growth in love toward all men.

The hymn was first published in the Erfurt Enchirirdion and Walther's book of 1524. Of the two English translations in common use, Richard Massie's is doubtless to be preferred:

May God be praised henceforth and blest
forever,
Who,Himself both Gift and Giver,
With His own flesh and blood our souls doth
noursih;
May they grow thereby and flourish!
O Lord,have mercy!
By Thy holy body,the selfsame
Which from Thine own mother Mary came,
By the drops Thou didst bleed,
Help us in the hour of need.
O Lord,have mercy!

Thou hast to death Thy holy body
given,
Life to win for us in heaven;
By stronger love,dear Lord,Thou
couldst not bind us,
Whereof this should well remind
us.
O Lord have mercy!
Lord,Thy love constrained Thee
for our good
Mighty things to do by Thy dear blood;
Thou hast paid all we owed,
Thou hast made our peace with God.
O Lord,have mercy!

May God bestow on us His grace and
blessing,
That,His holy footsteps tracing,
We walk as brethren dear in love and
union
Nor repent this sweet communion.
O Lord,have mercy!
Let not Thy good Spirit forsake
us,
Grant that heavenly-minded He make
us,
That Thy poor Church may see
Days of peace and unity.
O Lord,have mercy!

22. Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist
Now pray we all,God the Comforter

This great hymn for Pentecost is,in many respects,one of the grandest of Luther Lyrics. Full of worship as it is,sublime in thought,one is carried away by the majestic sweep of the words and melody. Here is an instance where the old adage,"Familiarity breeds contempt," does not hold, for the more one hears the hymn sung,the more appreciative one becomes. The words never lose their dew,never become threadbare. You may ring the changes upon them and never exhaust their music. You may beat them in the mortar of contemplation with the pestle of criticism and their fragrance becomes but the more apparent!

The hymn had its origin in a Latin hymn of the 12th century. It was introduced to the people in a German translation through the sermons of a Franciscan monk,Berthold of Regensburg,a famous preacher in Southern Germany. His manuscript,containing this hymn,is now in the library in Heidelberg. On a certain occasion he said,"Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist' is indeed a valuable hymn,wherefore it should please you the more to sing it,and that attentively with devout spirit unto God. This hymn is a good and profitable hymn,and he was a wiseman who wrote it."

Koch says that it was sung at Whitsuntide by the people,"during the ceremony in which a wooden dove was lowered by a chord from the roof of the chancel,or a living dove was thence let fly down."

Luther took the first stanza of this popular sacred song,which he pronounced elegant and beautiful,and added three others. The hymn was originally published in Walther's hymnal of 1524. Luther also included it in the collection of burial hymns. In some localities it soon became a standard hymn before the sermon.

Of the English translations,that by A.Russell is possibly the best and most faithful to the original.

Now pray we all God,the Comforter,
Into every heart true faith to pour
And that He defend us,Till death here end us,
When for heaven we leave this world of sorrow.
Have mercy,Lord.

Shine into us,O most holy Light,
That we Jesus Christ may know aright;
Stayed on Him forever,Our only Saviour,
Who to our true home again hath brought us.
Have mercy,Lord.

Spirit of love,now our spirits bless;
Them with thy own heavenly fire possess;
That in heart uniting,In peace delighting,
We may henceforth all be one in spirit,
Have mercy,Lord.

Our highest comfort in all distress!
O let naught with fear our hearts oppress;
Give us strength unfailing Oer fear prevailing,
When th' accusing foe would overwhelm us.
Have mercy,Lord.

D. Paraphrases of Other Scriptural Portions.

This group of Luther's hymns (no classification can be quite perfect) needs no formal introduction. Suffice it to say that Luther, because of his desire that the common,unlearned peasants should become acquainted with Holy Writ,was encouraged to present rudimentary portions in songs which they might easily learn,and,through singing,make their own. He recognized the significance and worth of a Bibel-saturated laity.

25. Diess sind die heiligen zehn Gebot.

That man a godly life might live

The Decalogue

The first versification of the Ten Commandments known to us dates from the 13th century. The Decalogue began to be used in Germany at the confession,and for the instruction of children,and in later times

on pilgrimages. Since the beginning of the 14th century the Decalogue frequently afforded a theme for poems which were sung in "Extraordinary Processions",in the Romish Church,wherefore each stanza ends with "Kyrie Eleison." The melody adapted to this hymn is borrowed from the processional hymn "In Gottes Namen fahren wir" and is ascribed by some authors to the 13th century.

The hymn,sung to this solemn,stately tune,must strike terror into the heart of the sinner. The opening stanza points to the Divine Lawgiver. In succedding stanzas the mirror of His Law is held aloft,and in it each gains a picture of his own transgressions. The concluding stanza is an earnest plea of the sinner for grace through Christ. This is also the significance of the plea "Have mercy,Lord!",appended to each stanza.

This "long" hymn on the Decalogue must be distinguished from the "short" hymn,"Mensch willst du leben seliglich," also written by Luther. We add that the expressions of the longer form are echoes rather than intonations of his sermon on the Decalogue,preached in 1516,in opposition to the contention of Spitta that the hymn was written long before 1524. In that year it appeared in the Erfurt Enchiridion under the title:"Die zehen gebot Gottes,auff den thon,'In gottes namen faren wir.'"

The only English translation in common use and worthy of serious consideration is that by R.Massie:

That man a godly life might live,
God did these Ten Commandments give
By His true servant Moses,high
Upon the Mount Sinai.
Have mercy,Lord!

I am thy God and Lord alone,
No other god beside Me own;
Put thy whole confidence in Me
And love Me e'er cordially.
Have mercy,Lord.

By idle word and speech profane
Take not My holy name in vain
And praise but that as good and true
Which I Myself say and do.
Have mercy,Lord!

Hallow the day which God hath blest
That thou and all thy house may rest;
Keep hand and heart from labor free
That God may so work in thee.
Have mercy,Lord!

Give to thy parents honor due,
Be dutiful,and loving too,
And help them when their strength decays,
So shalt thou have length of days.
Have mercy,Lord!

In sinful wrath thou shalt not kill,
Nor hate,nor render ill for ill;
Be patient and of gentle mood,
And to thy foe do thou good.
Have mercy,Lord!

Be faithful to thy marriage vows,
Thy heart give only to thy spouse;
Thy life keep pure,and lest thou sin,
Use temp'rance and discipline.
Have mercy,Lord!

Thy neighbor's house desire thou not,
His wife,nor aught that he hath got,
But wish that his such good may be
As thy heart doth wish for thee.
Have mercy,Lord!

Steal not; all usury abhor
Nor wring their life-blood from the poor,
But open wide thy loving hand
To all the poor in the land.
Have mercy,Lord!

God these commandments gave,therein
To show thee,child of man,thy sin
And make thee also well perceive
How man unto God should live.
Have mercy,Lord!

Bear not false witness nor belie
Thy neighbor by false calumny;
Defend his innocence from blame;
With charity hide his shame.
Have mercy,Lord!

Help us,Lord Jesus Christ,for we
A Mediator have in Thee.
Our works cannot salvation gain;
They merit but endless pain.
Have mercy,Lord!

24. Mensch willst du leben seliglich....
Wilt thou,Oman, live happily

The Decalogue

This companion of the preceeding hymn "Dies sind die heilgen zehen Gebot" was intended as a concise version for C techetical use, nd for the classroom. The Wittenberg Hymnal of 1524 has this title:"Die zehen gebot auffs kuertzte," and it seems safe to suppose it was penned before the longgr form.

Some fault Luther because of the content of the first stanza, saying he taught man might merit salvation through good works and the fulfillment of the law. But Olearius* defends Luther,and writes:"He who has no desire to keep the Commandments and,in harmony with their teaching,to show his faith by his love to God and his neighbor,in a practical way, can not live the life of the blessed,whether in the kingdom of grace or the kingdom of glory and honor.

The general plan and outline of the content is the same as in the longer form. We may add that stanza 6,which implores the aid of

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* Treasury of Hymns,Vol.III

Christ is not found in the original manuscript. It reads:

May Christ,the Lord,aid us to this;
He who our Mediator is.
With our good acts naught can be done
But earn chatisement alone.
Kyri' Eleison!

Of this hymn also,Richard Massie has given us the best English version:

Wilt thou,O man,live happily
And dwell with God eternally?
The Ten Commandments keep,for thus
Our God Himself biddeth us.
Have mercy,Lord!

I am thy Lord and God; take heed
Lest other gods do thee mislead.
Thy heart shall trust alone in Me;
Thou shalt My own kingdom be.
Have mercy,Lord.

Honor My name in word and deed
And call on Me in time of need.
Hallow the Sabbath that I may
Work in thy heart on that day.
Have mercy,Lord!

Obedient always,next to Me,
To father and to mother be.
Kill no man,but to wrath be slow.
Be true to thy marriage vow.
Have mercy,Lord!

Steal not nor do thy neighbor wrong
By bearing witness with false tongue.
Thy neighbor's wife desire thou not
Nor grudge him aught he hath got.
Have mercy,Lord!

25. Jesaia dem Propheten das geschah.

These things the seer Isaiah did
befall

Isaiah 6,1-4

This is the lofty German Sanctus which was first published in Luther's "Deutsche Messe," Wittenberg,1526,and which has retained its popularity to the present day. In many congregations it is used at every communion service,introducing the distribution of the elements.

Its usage,as indicated in the "Deutsche Messe," was,however, slightly different as to placement. According to the ritual directions the Sanctus was to be sung after the consecration of the host and its reception by the communicants. After the last stirring strain had died away,

the wine was consecrated and received.

Luther's melody is indeed a splendid contribution to the realm of church music,and instills a profound impulse for worship. On hearing the magnificent Trisagion,one is deeply moved.

The translation into English by Richard Massie has been repeated in many hymnals and is the best by common consent.

These things the seer Isaiah did befall:
In spirit he beheld the Lord of all
On a high throne,raised up in splendor bright,
His garment's border filled the choir with light.
Beside him stood two seraphim which had
Six wings,wherewith they both alike were clad;
With twain they hid their shining face,with twain
They hid their feet as with a flowing train,
And with the other twain they both did fly.
One to the other thus aloud did cry:
Holy is God,the Lord of Sabaoth!
Holy is God,the Lord of Sabaoth!
Holy is God,the Lord of Sbbaoth!
His glory filleth all the trembling earth!
With the loud cry the posts and thresholds shook,
And the whole house was filled with mist and smoke.

26. Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin. .

With peace and joy I now depart

Luke 2:29-32

The noble swan-song of the Swan of Eisleben,based on what is commonly known as the swan-song of the aged Simeon,has comforted many a dying Christian as the soul winged its flight to the realms of everlasting light.

The hymn is truly a beautiful expression of that spirit of peace and resignition which belongs to Christians alone in the hour of death. Said an old pagan philosopher:"The gods conceal from men the happiness of death that they may endure life." The happines of death becomes apparent through the knowledge that,for the redeemed,it is but a sleep. This conviction was Luther's,and when in later life he gave ut-

terance to that peaceful sleep,he repeatedly quoted the hymn instead of its corresponding passage of Scripture. Here,too,we detect the note of holy joy,characteristic of Luther Lyrics,in contradistinction to the mournful,ofttimes morbid tenor of Medieval Hymnody.

Though believed by some to have been written shortly after the Diet at Worms,the hymn first appeared in the Wittenberg Hymnal,1524. Here, the beautiful melody,also ascribed to Luther,is found. As Lambert has rightly remarked:"It rings like a martyr hymn."* It was also included among the six funeral hymns,published in 1542.

Of the ten translations of this hymn listed by Dr.Julian,that by Miss Winkworth,altered by L.W. Bacon,is the best.

In peace and joy I now depart
At God's disposing;
For full of comfort is my heart,
Soft reposing.
So the Lord hath promised me,
And death is but a slumber.

Him Thou hast unto all set forth
Their great Salavation,
And to His kingdom called the earth,
Every nation,
By Thy dear and wholesome Word,
In every place resounding.

'Tis Christ that wrought this work for me, He is the Hope and saving Light
The faithful Savior,
Whom Thou hast made mine eyes to see
By Thy favor.
Now I know He is my Life,
My help in need and dying.

Of lands benighted;
By Him are they who dwelt in night
Fed and lighted;
He is Israel's Praise and Bliss,
Their Joy,Reward,and Glory.

27. Sie ist mir lieb die werthe Magd

Dear is to me the holy Maid

Rev. 12:1-6

This hymn falls short of the general high standard of other ~~Luther Lyri~~ Luther Lyrics,and is most suitable for inclusion in hymnals. It smacks slightly of Mariolatry,for,in presenting a picture of the Christian Church,Luther doubtless had in mind "Maria,regina coeli." Luther's Magd is the "woman" in the Apocalypse who received a wondrous promise of help in the time of rising flood and distress,and represents the

true congregation of God in all ages.

In stanza 1 there is an expression of the author's great love for this Church that has shown such goodness. Stanza 2 contains a description of her deathless glory. The final stanza is the prophecy of her ultimate victory through the ascended Bridegroom, at the consummation of earthly hardships.

The hymn first appeared, with no suggested melody, in Klug's book of 1535 and 1543. Massie's translation is given little competition, and is subjoined:

Dear is to me the holy Maid,—
I never can forget her;
For glorious things of her are said;
Than life I love her better:
So dear and good,
That if I should
Afflicted be,
It moves not me;
For she my soul will ravish
With constancy and love's pure fire,
And with her bounty lavish
Fulfil my heart's desire.

She wears a crown of purest gold,
Twelve shining stars attend her;
Her raiment, glorious to behold,
Surpasses far in splendor
The sun and noon;
Upon the moon
She stands, the Bride
Of Him who died:
Sore travail is upon her;
She bringeth forth a noble Son
Whomaall the world doth honor;
She bows before his throne.

Thereat the Dragon raged, and stood
With open mouth before her;
But vain was his attempt, for God
Her buckler broad threw o'er her.
Up to his throne
He caught his Son,
But left the foe
To rage below.
The mother, sore afflicted,
Alone into the desert fled,
There by her God protected,
By her true Father fed.

28. Vater unser im Himmelreich

Our Father, thou in heaven

above

Matt. 6.

There were Pre-Reformation versifications of the Lord's Prayer, both in Latin and German, but these versions were either unintelligible to

the people or of such a pathetic caliber as to confuse them. An exposition of 4889 stanzas had been prepared by Henry of Krolewig during the 15th century. Luther,according to Buchwald,wrote the "Vater unser im Himmelreich" in the year 1539. It was first published on broadsheets and bore the title:"The Lord(s Prayer briefly expounded and turned into meter." The hymn is indeed a beautiful rendering,and some regard it as Luther's finest and most finished poetical production. It is a concise commentary on the Third Chief Part of the Catechism. In 54 lines Luther set forth an explanation whose wealth of thought would require that many sermons to express. It is said that a pious man in Venice,upon reading Luther's Paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer,without knowing the author,cried out,"Blessed be the womb that bare thee and the paps which thou hast sucked!"

The first stanza is a dilation upon the introduction,"Our Father"; each of the seven stanzas treat of a Petition; the last stanza is an amplification of the Amen.

Of the several English translations,our preference is for that of Miss Winkworth,which Dr.John Julian has characterized as "full and good."

Our Father,Thou in heaven above
Who biddest us to dwell in love
As brothers of one family,
And cry for all we need to Thee:
Teach us to mean the words we say
And from our inmost heart to pray.

Thy name be hallowed! Help us,Lord,
To keep in purity Thy Word
And lead according to Thy name
A holy life,untouched by blame.
Let no false teachings do us hurt,
All poor deluded souls convert.

Thy kingdom come! Thine let it be
In time and through eternity!
Oh,let Thy Holy Spirit dwell
With us to rule and guide us well.
From Satan's mighty power and rage
Preserve Thy Church from age to age.

Thy will be done on earth,O Lord,
As wgere in heaven Thou art adored!
Patience in time of grief bestow,
Obedience in weal and woe;
Our sinful flesh and blood control
Thatvthwart Thy will within the soul.

Give us this day our daily bread
And all that for this life we need;
From war and strife be our defense,
From famine and from pestilence,
That we may live in godly peace,
Unvexed by cares and avarice.

Lord,all our trespasses forgive
That they our hearts no more may grieve,
As we forgive their trespasses
Who unto us have done amiss.
Thus let us dwell in charity
And serve each other willingly.

(cont.)

Into temptation lead us not;
And when the Foe doth war and plot
Against our souls on every hand,
Then,armed with faith,O may we stand
Against him as a valiant host,
Through comfort of the Holy Ghost.

From evil,Lord,deliver us;
The times and days are perilous,
Redeem us from eternal death;
And when we yield our dying breath,
Console us,grant us calm release,
And take our souls to Thee in peace.

Amen! that is,So let it be!
Confirm our faith continually
That we may doubt not but believe
That what we ask we shall receive;
Thus in Thy name and at Thy word
We say: Amen; O hear us,Lord!

E. Original Hymns

Luther's determination to write original hymns was also realized. We have already considered several examples,"Ein neues Lied wir heben an," and "Für allen Freuden aud Erden." Some of these original Lyrics are among the best hymns Luther wrote.

29. Christ lag in Todesbanden

In death's strong grasp the

Savior lay

In the ErfurttEnchirirdion this hymn appeared under the title:"The hymn 'Christ ist erstanden,' improved," of which Luther said:"After a time one tires of singing all other hymns,but this one can always sing again." We find only slight traces of the "Christ ist erstanden" in Luther's hymn , however. Authorities are agreed that stanzas 4 and 5 are based on the old Latin sequence "Victimae paschali laudes," while several expressions may have been suggested by the "Surrexit Christus hodie." Though Luther found seed thoughts in these German and Latin stanzas,the development is wholly original. Dr. Julian catalogues it as a "hymn second only to his unequalled 'Ein' feste Burg'." *

The hymn first appeared in the Erfurt Enchiridion,1524,and again in 1525. The melody of this Easter hymn was also of Luther's hhnd. Of the

* Dictionary,p.225

18 translations into English,that by Miss Winkworth,though not in the original meter,is the best; (Lyra Germanica,p.87)

In the bonds of Death He lay,
Who for our offence was slain,
But the Lord is risen today,
Christ hath brought us life again.
Wherefore let us all rejoice,
Singing loud with cheerful voice
Hallelujah!

Of the sons of men were none
Who could break the bonds of Death,
Sin this mischief dire had done,
Innocent was none on earth;
Wherefore Death grew strong and bold,
Death would all men captive hold.
Hallelujah!

Jesus Christ,God's only Son,
Came at last our foe to smite,
All our sins away hath done,
Done away Death's power and right,
Only the form of Death is left,
Of his sting he is bereft;
Hallelujah!

'Twas a wondrous war,I trow,
When Life and Death together fought;
But life hath triumphed o'er his foe,
Death is mock'd and set at nought;
Yea,'tis as the Scripture saith,
Christ through death has conquer'd Death.
Hallelujah!

Now our Paschal Lamb is He,
And by Him alone we live,
Who to death upon the tree,
For our sake Himself did give.
Faith His blood strikes on our door,
Death dares never harm us more.
Hallelujah!

On this day most blest of days,
Let us keep high festival,
For our God hath show'd His grace,
And our Sun hath risen on all,
And our hearts rejoice to see
Sin and night before Him flee.
Hallelujah!

To the supper of the Lord,
Gladly will we come today,
The word of peace is now restored,
The old leaven is put away;
Christ will be our food alone,
Faith no life but His doth own.
Hallelujah!

30. Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam

To Jordan came our Lord,the Christ

We have already considered Luther's versification of the first three parts of the Catechism. In this Baptismal hymn he offers a poetic treatment of the Fourth Chief Part. The original title placed over it reads: "A hymn on our Holy Baptism,wherein is briefly embraced What is it? Who instituted it? What is its use?" It is a catechetical hymn setting forth the

Lutheran doctrine of Baptism,weaving in the history of Christ's baptism in the Jordan. Lambert rightly remarks:"The value of this hymn cannot be fully estimated until it is sung,which is the case with so many excellent hymns of the 16th century. A casual reading is not sufficient to reveal it as a pearl of great price."* Perhaps the current threat to remove this hymn from our new hymnal can be attributed to the fact that we have not even given it the "casual reading."

The hymnal first appeared on broadsheets in 1541. The Magdeburg Gesangbuch of 1542 contained a Low German version.

This Baptismal Hymn has never enjoyed popularity in the English speaking world. Only one full translation is in common use and comes from the pen of Massie. Many translators have condensed the hymn;Dr.Mills, for example, has presented it in three stanzas (Hymns from the German, p.210).

To Jordan came our Lord,the Christ,
To do God's pleasure willing,
And there was by St.John baptized,
All righteousness fulfilling;
There did He consecrate a bath
To wash away transgression
And quench the bitterness of Death
By His own blood and Passion,
He would a new life give us.

So hear ye all and well receive
What God doth call a Baptism,
And what a Christian should believe
Who error shuns and schism:
That we should water use the Lord
Declareth is His pleasure,
Not simple water,but the Word
And Spirit without measure;—
He is the true Baptizer.

To show us this,He hath His Word
With signs and symbols given;
On Jordan's banks was plainly heard
The Father's voice from heaven:
"This is My well-beloved Son,
In whom My soul delighteth;
Hear Him!" Yea,hear Him,every one,
Whom He Himself inviteth;
Hear and obey His teaching!

In tender manhood God the Son
In Jordan's water standeth;
The Holy Ghost from heaven's throne
In dovelike form descendeth;
That thus the truth be not denied,
Nor should our faith e'er waver,
That all three Persons do preside
At Baptism's holy laver
And dwell with the believer.

Thus Jesus His disciples sent:
Go,teach ye every nation,
That,lost in sin,they must repent
And flee from condemnation.
He that believes and is baptized
Shall thereby have salvation,
A new-born man he is in Christ,
From death free and damnation,
He shall inherit heaven.

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* Luther's Hymns,p.134

Who in this mercy hath not faith
Nor aught therein discerneth,
Is yet in sin,condemned to death
And fire that ever burneth;
His holiness avails him not,
Nor aught which he is doing;
His inborn sin brings all to naught
And maketh sure his ruin;
Himsalf he cannot succor.

The eye of sense alone is dim
And nothing sees but water;
Faith sees Christ Jesus and in Him
The Lamb ordained for slaughter;
It sees the cleansing fountain,red
With the dear blood of Jesus,
Which from the sins,inherited
From fallen Adam,frees us
And from our own misdoings.

51. Erhalt uns Herr bei deinem Wort

Lord,keep us steadfast in Thy Word

Luther's poetic gift,employed in penning original hymns,was also exercised in the cause of reform. In the year 1541 a service of intercession was held in Wittenberg against the Turks,for which Luther prepared special prayers and wrote a special hymn. To him,as to many in those stern times, the Pope and Turk were Anti-Christ. One passage from Luther's Table Talk will suffice to show his sentiments: "Antichrist is the Pope and the Turk together; a beast full of life must have a body and a soul; the spirit or soul of the Antichrist is the Pope,his flesh or body the Turk..." Luther assisted his beloved Germans in their resistance of the enemy by his utterances and hymns through which they were strengthened.

This special hymn appeared first in broadsheet form in Wittenberg in 1542. In Klug's hymnal it bore the title:"A Hymn for the children to sing against the two arch-enemies of Christ and his holy Church,the Pope and Turks." An unknown author later added a fourth stanza. Some scholars claim Justus Jonas penned it,for he is the author of the 4th fifth stanza.

The line "Und steur des Pabsts und Türken Mord" was and is still objectionable to many,particularly to the Romanists,and has been the butt of much ridicule. A prominent English writer scornfully dubbed it "Luther's Pope and Turk". The objection,however,has been eliminated in a translation by Miss Winkworth which we subjoin. Our hymn 1 gives a translation which is closer to the original,and which has the appended4th and 5th stanza of Jonas.

Lord,keep us steadfast in Thy Word;
Curb those who fain by craft or sword
Would wrest the kingdom from Thy Son,
And set at naught all He hath done.

Lord Jesus Christ,Thy power make known,
For Thou art Lord of Lords alone;
Defend Thy Christendom,that we
May evermore sing praise to Thee.

O Comforter,of priceless worth,
Send peace and unity on earth,
Support us in our final strife,
And lead us out of death to life.

32. Jesus Christus unser Heiland,der den

Jesus Christ,who came to save
us.

This is an original Easter hymn by Luther in praise of the Triumphant Christ, Though brief in form,it is rich and profound in sentiment, sublime in its simplicity.

The sinless Christ by His glorious resurrection has taken captivity captive,and delievers from eternal death those who trust in Him.

The hymn,coupled with a melody composed by Luther,first appeared in the Erfurt Enchiridion,1524,and in several hymnals of the following year.

Translations into English are not common. Of these that by Dr. Bacon is,perhaps,the best,and reads:

Jesus Christ,who came to save,
And overcame the grave,
Is now arisen,
And sin hath bound in prison.
Kyri' Eleison.

Who withouten sin was found
Bore our transgression's wound.
He is our Savior,
And brings us to God's favor.
Kyri' Eleison.

Life and mercy,sin and death,
All in his hands he hath;
Them he'll deliever,
Who trust in him forever.
Kyri' Eleison.

35. Nun freut euch lieben Christengemein

Dear Christians,one and all rejoice

This "thanksgiving for the highest benefits which God has shown us in Christ" is Luther's first congregational hymn. It appeared as a companion to his "Ein neues Lied",the poem dedicated to the memory of the first Christian martyrs who were Lutherans. Says Lambert:"Luther was moved to sing the praises of divine grace by which he was enabled to receive the Gospel directly from God. He describes in tones of great animation how Christ freed him from anxiety caused by his efforts to rid himself of the doctrine of meritorious works. He describes the progress made along these lines,from his entry into the monastery to the beginning of his activity in Wittenberg."*

By its clear and full doctrinal statement in flowing verse it soon became popular in Germany. For poets and hymnwriters it became the model for Protestant Church-hymns. When we sing it,we are actually,though unconsciously,reading the lifestory of our own hearts.

This hymn stands first on the title page of the Achtliderbuch, and was therefore written previous to,or during,the year 1523. It is known in England and America as "Luther's Judgment Hymn" from its association with a hymn of W.B.Collyer,probably derived from the German,but <u>not</u> written by the Reformer. The melody is said to have been written down by Luther from hearing it sung by a traveling artisan,and bears considerable resemblance to an old popular song tune.

An eye-witness of the Reformation,Tileman Heshusius,says of this hymn:

> "Who can doubt that by this hymn many hundreds of Christians have been converted to the faith of Jesus,who had never before heard of the name Luther? But his noble and dear words won their hearts over to the reception of the truth; so that,in my opinion,the spiritual songs have contributed not a little to the spread of the Gospel."

Owing to the structure of the hymn,forbidding selection,and to its length,there have been comparatively few good English translations that have

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* Luther(s Hymns,p.77

come into common usage. Massie's is the best of these:

Dear Christians,one and all rejoice,
With exultation springing,
And with united heart and voice
And holy rapture singing,
Proclaim the wonders God hath done,
How his right arm the victory won;
Right dearly it hath cost him.

Fast bound in Satan's chain's I lay,
Death brooded darkly o'er me;
Sin was my torment night and day,
Therein my mother bore me,
Deeper and deeper still I fell,
Life was become a living hell,
So firmly sin possessed me.

My good works could avail me naught,
For they with sin were stained;
Free-will against God's judgment fought,
And dead to good remained.
Grief drove me to despair,and I
Had nothing left me but to die,
To hell I fast was sinking.

Gad saw,in his eternal grace,
My sorrow out of measure;
He thought upon his tenderness—
To save was his good pleasure.
He turned to me a Father's heart—
Not small the cost—to heal my smart
He gave his best and dearest.

He spake to his beloved Son:
'Tis time to take compassion;
Then go,bright jewel of my crown,
And bring to man salavation;
From sin and sorrow set him free,
Slay bitter death for him,that he
May live with thee forever.

The Son delighted to obey,
And born of Virgin mother,
Awhile on this low earth did stay
That he might be my brother.
His mighty power he hidden bore,
A servant's form like mine he wore,
To bind the devil captive.

To me he spake: cling fast to me,
Thou'lt win a triumph worthy;
I wholly give myself for thee;
I strive and wrestle for thee;
For I am thine,thou mine also;
And where I am thou art. The foe
Shall never more divide us.

For he shall shed my precious blood,
Me of my life bereaving;
All this I suffer for thy good;
Be steadfast and believing.
My life from deathbthe day shall win,
My righteousness shall bear thy sin,
So art thou blest forever.

Now to my Father I depart,
From earth to heaven ascending;
Thence heavenly wisdom to impart,
The Holy Spirit sending.
He shall in trouble comfort thee,
Teach thee to know and follow me,
And to the truth conduct thee.

What I have done and taught,do thou
To do and teach endeavor;
So shall my kingdom flourish now,
And God be praised forever.
Take heed lest men with base alloy
The heavenly treasure should destroy.
This counsel I bequeath thee.

34. Vom Himmel hoch da komm ich her

From heaven above to earth I come..*

This well known Christmas carol,perhaps the best loved of all Luther's hymns,reveals the tenderness of the rugged Reformer and one of the

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* Prof. W.G.Polack offers a very splendid and detailed treatment of this hymn : Favorite Christian Hymns,Vol.I,p.13 ff.

lovable sides of his strong character. Luther had a great love for children which amounted to something of a passion. In a sense he was their champion, for he had their interests at heart throughout his grand career. And this lovable side of Luther is revealed by this beautiful carol which,once heard, can never be forgotten.

The story behind the carol is particularly touching. It takes us back to Christmas of the year 1534. Catherine,Luther's devoted wife,found she was unable to make the proper preparation for the holidays and at the same time hover about the cradle of little Paul,their infant son. Luther himself was busily engaged in prpparing for the Christmas services. Nevertheless,wearied by toil,Catherine at length requested him to mind the little one that she might be free to bring her tasks to completion. Luther wisely consented,and taking his Bible in his hand,he seated himself beside the cradle and began to rock it. Seeing the frail and tiny figure reposing there,his great heart was deeply touched. Reaching for his lute,he tuned it,and began to hum and strum softly a popular sacred song,the verse first of which runs:

Ich komm aus fremden Landen her
Und bring euch viel der neuen Mähr;
Der neuen Mähr bring ich so viel
Mehr denn ich euch heir sagen will.

The sweet singer cannot avoid the thought of another stranger from a distant land,the angel who appeared to the shepherds bringing glad tidings. Into the mouth of this messenger Luther places the good news of the Savior's birth in verse.

Verse grew upon verse until the hymn was completed. It was an annual custom in Luther's family at Christmas time to sing it. Some friend,dressed as an angel,would appear and sing the first 5 verses of the hymn. The rest of the stanzas were sung byt the happy,gleeful children in answer to the angel's message.

The carol first appeared in the Wittenberg hymnal of 1535. Of the

16 English translations,Miss Winkworth's is unquestionably the best. It appears to be an original composition rather than a translation.

From heaven above to earth I come
To bear good news to every home;
Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
Whereof I now will say and sing.

To you this night is born a child
Of Mary chosen virgin mild;
This little child,of lowly birth,
Shall be the joy of all the earth.

This is the Christ,our God and Lord,
Who in all need shall aid afford;
He will Himself your Savior be,
From all your sins to make you free.

He brings those tidings long ago
Prppared by God for all below,
That in His heavenly kingdom blest
You may with us forever rest.

These are the tokens ye shall mark:
The swaddling-clothes and manger dark;
There shall ye find the young Child laid
By whom the heavens and earth were made.

Now let us all with gladsome cheer
Go with the shepherds and draw near
To see the wondrous gift of God,
Who hath His own dear Son bestowed.

Give heed,my heart,lift up thine eyes!
What is it in yon manger lies?
Who is this child,so young and fair?
Dear little Jesus lieth there.

Welcome to earth,Thou noble Guest,
Through whom the sinful world is blest!
Thou com'st to share my misery,
What thanks shall I return to Thee?

Ah! Lord,who hast created all,
How hast Thou made Thee weak and small
That Thou must choose Thy infant bed
Where humble cattle lately fed.

And were the world ten times as wide,
With gold and jewels beautified,
It would be far too small to be
A narrow cradle,Lord,for Thee.

For velvets soft and silken stuff
Thou hast but hay and straw so rough,
Whereon Thou,king so rich and great,
As 'twere Thy heaven,art throned in state.

And thus,dea Lord,it pleased Thee
To make this truth quite plain to me,
That this world's honor,wealth,and might
Are naught and worthless in Thy sight.

Ah! dearest Jesus,holy Child,
Make Thee a bed,soft,undefiled,
Within my heart,that it may be
A chamber consecrate to Thee.

My heart for very joy doth leap,
My lips no more can silence keep;
I,too,must sing with joyful tongue
That sweetest ancient cradle-song:

Glory to God in highest heav'n,
Who unto man His Son hath giv'n!
While angels sing with pious mirth
A glad New Year to all the earth.

35. Vom Himmel kam der Engel Schar

To Shepherds as they watched by night

This is the second Christmas hymn of the great Reformer who restored to his people the real Christ of CHRISTmas. Authorities claim that it is based

on Luke 2,10-11 and Matt.2,6. The hymn was apparently written in 1543,and in time was substituted for the longer form,"Vom Himmel hoch," though it was not at first intended as a hymn for public worship. In reference to Luther's two Christmas hymns,Achelis rightly remarks:

> "Each presents the Christ from a totally different perception. The hymn,'Vom Himmel hocj' sets forth the great humility of Christ,whilst this hymn treats of the significance of the Incarnation for the redemption of the world. Be not afraid,but rejoice over this Child,is its tone. It appears altogether unchildlike when compared with 'Vom Himmel hoch'."

This hymn does manifest a virile,courageous spirit,to such a degree indeed that
that it is not difficult to think of it as being penned by the author of the rugged,vigorous "Ein feste Burg".*

The first stanza contains the message of the angelsto the shepherds. The next refers to the ancient Messianic prophecies. The third is an exhortation to rejoice because of the reconciliation. The three last stanzas comprise the taunt-song of Christians at the defeat of Satan,and a jubilation over the victory of God's people.

The hymn was first published in the "Geistliche Lieder",Wittenberg, 1545. Of the translations into English that by Richard Massie is acknowledged as superior by most critics.

To shepherds,as they watched by night,
Appeared a troop of angels bright;
Behold the tender Babe,they said,
In yonder lowly manger bed.

At Bethlehem,in David's town,
As Micah did of old make known;
'Tis Jesus Christ,your Lord and King,
Who doth to all salvation bring.

Rejoice ye,then,that through His Son
God is with sinners now at one;
Made like yourselves flesh and blood,
Your Brother is th' eternal God.

What harm can sin and death,then,do?
The true God now abides with you,
Let hell and Satan rage and chafe,
God is your Brother---ye are safe.

Not one He will,nor can,forsake
Who Him his con fidence doth make;
E'en if their worst your en'mies try,
Ye may their powerless rage defy.

Ye must prevail at last,for ye
Have now become God's family;
To God forever give ye praise,
Patient and cheerful all your days.

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* W.Nelle says of this hymn:"Dies Lied ist so persönlich,dass Luther in der zweiten Hälfte die Engel geradezu lutherisch reden lässt! Sie müszen den Hirten in Luthers Worten die Rechtfertigung durch den Glauben verkündigen! Er legt den Engeln sein Evangelium im Mund!" Gesch. d.deut.ev. Kirchenl.,p.26

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"All sound thinking for things to come must spring from deep-rooted respect for what has lasted and served well through previous generations."

We may now lift our eyes from a careful study of the individual hymns of Luther,and,in the next brief paragraphs,view them collectively. Several important characteristics stand out in bold relief.

We find that these hymns fulfill the requirements of true evangelical Church-hymns. They are really hymns,models: dignified,yet simple; they contain the profoundest thoughts expressed in the clearest language; they have inherent power and are thoroughly idiomatic. They are churchly: they express the great truths of Christianity which the believers confess and experience in their lives. "They breathe the bold,confident,joyful spirit of justifying faith which was the beating heart of his (Luther's) theology and piety."*

We find that Luther's hymns are all of them vehicles of the Church's faith,objective rather than subjective. By means of singing the Church gives expression of that Faith,necessitating hymns of a deep confessional nature. The doctrine of Justification by Faith became the great theme of Luther's hymns. Since these hymns are an expression of the Church's, and not the individual's,faith,the extreme subjectivism,so prevalent in later hymnody is lacking.** Not that the subjective element is lacking altogether,but the subjective element of the individual expression is lacking and the common experience of all Christians is stressed. While Luther's hymns express themselves objectively,each individual knows he is also in-

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* Julian,Dictionary,p.414

** W.Nelle:"Sie sind vorbildlich für aller Gemeindegesang. Sie sind es als Wirlieder. Sie singen und sagen,was die ganze Gemeinde bewegt." "Man hat die Zeit Luthers die Zeit des Bekenntnisliedes genannt. In der Tat redet in diesen Liedern nicht der Professor,sondern der Konfessor. Luthers Lieder sind 'Bruchstücke einer grossen Konfession,' sofern sie sein persönlichstes Leben zum Ausdrucke bringen,mehr noch aber sind sie Bekenntnisse des Glaubens der Kirche." p.32

cluded. The objectivity of Christian experience is so presented that the individual could sing,and sing the truth! Now this does not mean that the first person is never used,for that in itself is not the deciding factor.

Luther's hymns are in praise of God,not of man. They breathe the confident trust that God will stand by His Church and not fordake those who confess His name.* They are also hymns of petition for help and strength in the hour of trial and temptation. Luther throws into them all his own fervent faith and deep devotion. His psalms and hymns are not marked by their refined taste or their splendid imagery; but we value in them their fulness of Scriptural truth,their plainness to the comprehension of all,their simple beauty and honest strength; and they are not without traces of the boldness and sublimity of the genius of the writer.

In conclusion,we could not do better than cite the remark of Spangenberg,Luther's contemporary:"One must surely let this be true and remain true,that,among all Meistersingers,from the days of the Apostles till now, Lutherus is and always will be the best and most accomplished; in his hymns and songs one does not find a vain or needless word. All flows and falls in the sweetest and neatest manner,full of spirit and doctrine,so that his every word gives outright a sermon of its own,or,at least,a singular reminiscence. There is nothing forced,nothing patched up,nothing fragmentary. Thy rhymnes are easy and good,the words choice and proper,the meaning clear and intelligible,the melodies lovely,cheering and comforting,that,in sooth, you will not find his equal,much less his master!"

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* W.Nelle:"...Luthers grosses soziales Lied 'Vater unser im Himmelreich,' in dem der Dicter mit dem Tiefblick des Seelsorgers alle Wunden am Leibe des Volkslebens aller Zeiten,zumal auch unserer Zeit schaut und dem grossen himmlischen Arzte befiehlt..."