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THE SOTERIOLOGY OF THE LUTHERAN CHORALE
OF THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

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INTRODUCTION

The Lutheran Chorale is one of the priceless jewels in the heritage of the Lutheran Church. During the Reformation Period it became part and parcel of the life of the people. Even to this day the chorale is one of the strongest pillars in church life on the European continent.

Yet the fact remains that the chorale has not enjoyed popular use in America. Unlike its continental counterpart, the Lutheran Church in America today does not accept and use the chorale to any great extent. The chorale has not become vital in the life of the Lutheran Church on these shores. In consulting some of the hymnals of the branches of Lutheranism in America it is often difficult to find even many of the great hymns of the Reformation heritage.

There may be, and probably are, a variety of reasons why the chorale has not become popular in America. However, one of the more serious which has come to my attention, and I cannot say how wide spread this charge is, is that the chorale doesn't contain enough Gospel, if it contains Gospel at all. The study which this paper embraces is a result of this charge.

It is a problem of concern because it has been felt in some circles of the church that much inferior hymnody, and in many cases doctrinally unsound hymnody, has been introduced into the Lutheran service of worship in place of the hymnody of the Lutheran heritage. If the charge of the lack

of Gospel could be substantiated it would form a strong argument for this continued disuse of the chorale.

The problem has thus resolved itself into a question of whether or not the Lutheran Chorale proclaims the Gospel. Or if you will, "What is the soteriological element in the chorale?"

Soteriology is defined for our purpose by St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians. Eph. 2: 4,5,8,9.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;). . . For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; Not of works, lest any man should boast.

When considering the soteriological element of the chorale, it must also be kept in mind that the chorale is often placed in a liturgical and sermonic setting. In such a situation it becomes an intricate part of the entire service of worship. The setting of the hymn has much to do in determining the color and force of a chorale in which the soteriological factor may be vague or indistinct.

We also note that chorales, many of which are of great length, are not always sung in their entirety. In fact many hymnals omit various stanzas of a chorale and thus seriously impair the thought and intent the hymn writer attempted to convey. Often too, such omission strips the hymn of its full soteriological element, character and qualities.

The total number of chorales written by evangelical composers is well in excess of 100,000. We have made no

pretense of having read, much less analyzed, all of them. What we have endeavoured to do though is to take from each period of the chorales' development a number of representative chorales. These chorales formed the basis of our discussion.

Chorales such as "Ein' feste Burg" which have become extremely ecumenical, and thus have come to mean all things to all men, have been avoided. This is not to be a criterion, however, of the superiority or inferiority of the chorales chosen or omitted.

The period of the chorale under consideration has been defined in the title as of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Strictly speaking, the chorale begins with the time of Luther ca.1523 and ends with the period of Paul Gerhardt ca.1670. We define it thus, because Luther is generally considered the father of evangelical hymnody, Beginning with 1670 Pietism is already a dominant factor.

In the chapter on the "Chorale in Translation" we merely wish to show what has happened to the soteriological element in the translation of the chorale. Our primary concern is not whether or not doctrinal bias was a dominant factor, but merely to trace what happened to the Gospel proclamation of the original text. In this we have considered and consulted several hymnals of various denominations. It might be added that in this chapter we point up the negative aspect of the question. In doing this we do not want to give the impression that the good work done in translating by such persons as Catherine Winkworth and Richard

Massey have gone by unnoticed or unappreciated.

I wish to acknowledge the aid and assistance rendered me by my faculty advisor in this project, Dr. Walter E. Buszin. His efforts and the generous use of his library, in a field where a dearth of material exists, were to a large measure responsible for the successful completion of this endeavour.

This paper is written in the sincere hope that it might point up the great treasure which the Lutheran Church has in its chorale and at the same time incite at least some of our clergy and musicians to a more fervent and consistent use of the chorale in their services of worship. It is my opinion that thereby their congregations will be strengthened in the mutual confession that Christ is their Savior. For if there is one thing certain concerning chorales, it is the fact that they confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the only way of salvation for mankind.

CHAPTER II

THE HYMN AS BEARER OF DOCTRINE

Using the hymn in divine worship is a practice as old as divine worship itself.¹ It has its roots in the Old Testament singing of Psalms.² The New Testament soon followed the admonition of Paul, of teaching and admonishing each other with Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts unto the Lord.³ At first the New Testament church confined the texts of its hymns to the Psalms but gradually the sphere of the texts was expanded to include paraphrases of the Psalms and tonal settings of portions of the New Testament.⁴

The Church both in the Old and New Testaments looked upon song as a gift of God to man. Through song they believed the heavenly proclamation was propagated and preserved, for many were able to learn the doctrines of the church more easily and could retain them more readily when these doctrines were embraced in the hymns which they

¹Wilhelm Nelle, Geschichte des deutschen evangelischen Kirchenliedes (Hamburg: Gustav Schloessmann's Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1904), p. 77.

²E. Sperber, Evangelischer Schul-Liederschatz: Die Entwicklung des deutsch-evangelischen Kirchenliedes (Guetterslok, Germany: C. Bertelsmann, 1901), II, 3 f.

³Colossians 3. 16.

⁴Sperber, op. cit., p. 33.

sang.⁵ The hymn was thus looked upon as being credal in character. The Creed was the spoken word, the hymn the sung word.⁶ Benson has grasped the thought in the following:

What poetry can do for doctrine is to humanize it, to set it in the light of imagination and to clothe it with feeling. And it is this handling of doctrine that has made the Church hymnbook the actual creed of countless thousands of Christians who have never so much as had the historic Church confessions in their hands.⁷

The post apostolic fathers were quick to seize upon the value of the hymn. It was used by many as a means of building the faith of the people.⁸ Ever since the time when the "Hymn Concerning Christ the Redeemer", was composed by Clement of Alexandria early in the third century,⁹ the hymn has been a singularly effective medium of bearing Christian doctrine.¹⁰ "For doctrine then, the hymnbook thus supplements Catechetics."¹¹

Hymnody and the Dissemination of Doctrine

The church soon learned that hymns are effective carriers

⁵Oskar Soehngen, Die Zukunft des Gesangbuches (Merseburger edition; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt Gmb H., nd.), p. 16.

⁶Christa Mueller, "Das Glaubens bekenntnes im Kirchenlied," Monatschrift fuer die Gottesdienst und Kirchliche Kunst (Februar-Maerz, 1936), p. 36.

⁷Louis F. Benson, The Hymnody of the Christian Church (New York: George H. Doran Co., c.1927), p. 14 f.

⁸Sperber, op. cit., p. 5.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Benson, op. cit., p. 18.

¹¹Ibid., p. 19.

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of heresy and of orthodoxy.¹² When in the fourth century hymnody expanded more rapidly, it was under the incitement of the struggle between the heretics and the Church. The Church was forced to meet the false doctrine which the heretic hymnody propagated with orthodox hymns of its own vintage.¹³

Heretics quickly discovered the value of poetry as a means of disseminating their doctrines, especially when that poetry was set to music. Already in the middle of the second century the gnostics Marcion and Valentinus resorted to the device.¹⁴ And among the first and most effective uses of hymnody to disseminate heretical views was that made by Bardesanes of Syria,¹⁵ who worked in collaboration with his son Harmonius. Harmonius would set his fathers texts to music and the two together produced a "Gnostic Psalter" of 150 hymns.¹⁷ Ephraem of Syria who combated Bardesanes writes:

In the resorts of Bardesanes
There are songs and melodies;
For seeing that young people
Loved sweet music,
By the harmony of his songs
He corrupted their morals.¹⁸

¹²Ibid., p. 45.

¹³Sperber, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁴C. S. Phillips, Hymnody Past and Present (London: S. P. C. K., 1937), p. 21.

¹⁵Bardesanes a religious teacher, who sought to combine with the truths of Christianity certain speculations of the Gnostics. A Dictionary of Hymnology, edited by John Julian (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1891), p. 6.

¹⁶Sperber, op. cit., p. 6.

¹⁷Phillips, op. cit., p. 28.

¹⁸Ibid.

In defense of true doctrine over and against Bardesanes, Ephraem of Syria took up the challenge and fought for the orthodox faith with hymns of his own.¹⁹

In this same period, while Ephraem was coping with the relics of Gnosticism in Syria, the main body of christendom was involved in the conflict between orthodoxy and Arianism.²⁰ Its founder, Arius, from the outset used hymns to propagate his ideas,²¹ hymns which moralized and were sung by many, and which gave Arius the reputation of having hymns so effective²² that Duchesene writes:

The workers of the port, the sailors, the idlers and the common people knew these songs and deafened the faithful of Alexandria with them.²³

The church combated Arius with imperial aid, as in the case of Chrysostom who was aided by the Empress Eudoxia, Chrysostom instituted nocturnal processions with singing.²⁴ The church also fought the inroads of Arian hymnody by decree of council, as was done in the Council of Chalcedon which banned all private hymns.²⁵ However, the church also combated the inroads of Arianism with her own hymnody and ultimately gave birth to the father of Western Hymnody, Hilary of Poitiers.

¹⁹Sperber, op. cit., p. 10.

²⁰Arius and Arianism denied the deity of Christ. Strictly speaking he denied the co-essentiality of Christ with God. Lutheran Cyclopedia, edited by Erwin L. Lueker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1954), p. 53.

²¹Phillips, op. cit., p. 29.

²²Sperber, op. cit., p. 9.

²³Phillips, op. cit., p. 29.

²⁴Ibid., p. 30.

²⁵Sperber, op. cit., p. 9.

Upon his exile Hilary went to the East and there learned the orthodox hymns of the Eastern Church. Seeing how the Arians made use of hymnody, Hilary was incited to write hymns for the Western Church to defend true doctrine and the orthodox faith.²⁶

Nevertheless, likely the most effective use of hymnody to disseminate doctrine was that made by Martin Luther. Luther, a great lover of music and steeped in the folksong and traditional vernacular hymnody of his race, saw clearly how much could be done to assist the spreading of his views by means of hymnody. The singing of hymns made a vehicle for spreading and perpetuating his teachings.²⁷ Luther himself has this to say concerning the function of hymnody; he insisted that it should not only praise and glorify God, but also that we

. . . durch sein heiliges Wort mit sueszen
Gesang, in das Herz getrieben, gebessert und
gestaerkt werden im Glauben.²⁸

For Luther the hymn which bore doctrine, the hymn which embraced the gospel message was an effective agent through which the Holy Spirit worked. The hymn was a means of grace in which the power of the Holy Spirit worked.²⁹ Thus, Luther put forth in his hymn a reflexion and purity of scriptural truth. He is properly understood as a dogmatician also in

²⁶Ibid., p. 11.

²⁷Phillips, op. cit., p. 100.

²⁸Paul Gabriel, Das Deutsche Evangelische Kirchenlied von Martin Luther bis zur Gegenwart, zweite, erweiterte Auflage (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1951), p. 20.

²⁹Soehngen, op. cit., p. 16.

his hymnody, a hymnody which included hymns treating the materials embraced in his Catechism.³⁰ This use of doctrine in his hymnody proved to be effective if the words of his adversaries are any criteria. A Romanist contemporary complained that "the whole country is singing itself into this Lutheran doctrine."³¹ The Jesuit Conzenius said in 1620 concerning Luther's hymns: "Hymni Lutheri animas plures quam scripta et declamationes occiderunt."³²

Hymnody as a Reflector of Denominational Emphasis

The examination of denominational hymnody reveals the use of hymns as media of perpetuating doctrinal emphases peculiar to that denomination. In the Roman Catholic hymnody of the Pre-Reformation Period there is to be noted the emphasis on "Maryolatry" and, especially with regard to the sacrament, its emphasis on "transubstantiation." Gottfried von Straszburg in the thirteenth century composed a Latin hymn of praise to both Mary and Christ. This hymn is typical of many hymns of this period.

Du Rosebluete, du Lillienblatt,
du Koenigin in der hohen stadt.

after which he continues:

³⁰Nelle, op. cit., p. 31 f.

³¹Phillips, op. cit., p. 100.

³²Sperber, op. cit., p. 106.

Ich han gelobet die muoter din,
vil suezter Krist und herre mi,
der eren shrin
in dem du mensche wuerde.³³

This emphasis in Roman Catholic hymnody continued to develop. It reached its peak during the period of the Meistersang, when more and more of the poets turned for their theme to Mary and thus gave rise to the "Marienkultus." "Dich Fraw vom Himmel, ruff ich an," and "Maria, zart von edler art, ein ros ohn alle doren," are two such hymns from this period. As a result, later in the period, the composers wended away yet further and included also St. Anne, the mother of Mary, in their theme.³⁴

To be noted also is the hymn based upon the Latin sequence, "Lauda Sion salvatorum" which puts forth the doctrine of transubstantiation, Sperber records this sequence in the German:

Gegeben wird der Glaubensatz der Christen, dasz
in Fleisch uebergeht das Brot und in Blut der Wein.
Fleisch ist die Speise, Blut der Trank, doch bleibt
Christus ganz unter beiderlei Gestalt.³⁵

The peculiar emphasis in the Reformed branch of Christendom has been and is the "sovereignty of God." This emphasis is reflected in Reformed hymnody. The hymn by Augustus M. Toplady, of which only the first and third stanzas are here quoted, reflects this:

³³Ibid., p. 61 f.

³⁴Ibid., p. 89.

³⁵Ibid., p. 57 f.

How vast the benefits divine
Which we in Christ possess!
We are redeemed from sin and shame,
And called to holiness.
'tis not for works that we have done,
These all to Him we owe;
But He, of His electing love,
Salvation doth bestow.

Safe in the arms of sovereign love
We ever shall remain;
Nor shall the race of earth or hell
Make Thy sure counsel vain.
Not one of all the chosen race
But shall to heaven attain;
Here they will share abounding grace,
And there with Jesus reign.³⁶

This emphasis is further noted in a translation of Luther's hymn "Aus tiefer Not." Luther wrote in the second stanza:

Bei dir gilt nichts denn Gnad und Gunst
Die Sunden zu vergeben,
Es ist doch unser Tun umsonst
Auch in dem besten Leben.
Vor dich niemand sich ruehmen Kann
des musz dich fuerchten jedermann
und deiner Gnade leben.³⁷

This was translated thus in an eccumenical hymnal published in Geneva:

Thy sovereign grace and boundless love
Make Thee, O Lord, forgiving;
My purest tho'ts and deeds but prove
Sin in my heart is living;
None guiltless in Thy sight appear;
All who approach Thy throne must fear
And hymbly trust Thy mercy.³⁸

³⁶Psalter Hymnal: Doctrinal Standards and Liturgy of the Christian Reformed Church (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Publication Committee of the Christian Reformed Church, c.1934), p. 431.

³⁷Kirchengesangbuch fuer Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, nd.), p.146.

³⁸Cantate Domino (Geneva, Switzerland: World's Student Christian Federation Hymnal, 1951), #. 98.

Lutheran hymnody reflects the doctrinal emphasis peculiar to Lutherans. Its emphasis on salvation by grace alone through faith is demonstrated in the Reformation hymn "Es ist das Heil uns kommen her." The first and ninth stanzas are quoted here to illustrate.

Salvation unto us has come
By God's free grace and favor;
Good works cannot avert our doom,
They help and save us never.
Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone,
Who did for all the world atone;
He is our one Redeemer.

Faith clings to Jesus' cross alone
And rests in Him unceasing;
And by its fruits true faith is known
With love and hope increasing.
Yet faith alone doth justify.
Works serve thy neighbor and supply
The proof that faith is living.³⁹

The Lutheran viewpoint on baptism and baptismal regeneration is revealed in Lutheran hymnody. To illustrate this, Luther's hymn "Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam," the first and fifth stanzas, are quoted:

Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam
nach seines Vaters Willen,
von Sankt Johann's die Taufe nahm,
sein Werk und Amt zu 'rfuellen;
da wollt' er stiften uns ein Bad,
zu waschen uns von Suenden,
ersaeufen auch den bittern Tod
durch sein selbst Blut und Wunden;
es falt ein neues Leben.

Sein' Juenger heisst der Herre Christ:
Geht hin, all' Welt zu lehren,
dasz sie verlör'n in Suenden ist,
sieh soll zur Busze kehren.

³⁹The Lutheran Hymnal (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1941), #. 377.

Wer glaubet und sich taufen laeszt,
soll dadurch selig werden;
ein neugeborener Mensch er heiszt,
der nicht mehr koenne sterben,
das Himmelreich soll erben.⁴⁰

The Lutheran doctrine of the real presence and the sin-forgiving power of the sacrament have been perpetuated in Lutheran hymnody, as the first stanza of the hymn "Herr Jesu Christ, du hast bereit't" will attest.

Lord Jesus Christ, Thou hast prepared
A feast for our salvation,
It is Thy body and Thy blood;
And at Thy invitation
As weary souls, with sin opprest,
We come to Thee for needed rest,
For comfort and for pardon.⁴¹

Hymnody as a Reflector of its Period

Hymnody reflects too the period in which it was written. Tracing sketchily the German Chorale for the Reformation period through Rationalism we see, at least in part, how this works out. In the Reformation period and through the period of Orthodoxy hymn-writers would address their hymns to the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. In most instances during this period the hymns would address all three persons; however, if only God the Son was addressed, the poet would use; "Herr Christus," "Jesu Christus," "Christus," or "Herr Jesu Christus;" only seldom would he use the phrase or address so characteristic of Pietism and the "Jesus" hymn.

⁴⁰Kirchensangbuch, p. 124 f.

⁴¹The Lutheran Hymnal, #. 306.

The hymn during Pietism would add to the terms "Jesus" or "Herr Jesus" all sorts of tender and sweet adjectives. In the period of Rationalism, hymns seldom addressed themselves to God's Son but rather to: "Gott," "Vatergott," "Herr Gott" or "Heiland". In the nineteenth century God was often not addressed at all.⁴²

More specifically the hymns of the Pietistic period contained all sorts of sentimentalisms, triflings, and empty figures of speech. Their hymns indicated that a period of decay and deterioration of the Chorale had set in and yet they represented the religious aura of the period in which they were written. It was a period whose hymns for the most part were devotional in character; they exhibited much bad taste and little poetic value.⁴³

By the middle of the eighteenth century Pietism was on its way out. It had been weak on the intellectual side, and its emotionalism degenerated into sentimentality and dreary cliches.⁴⁴

As a reaction to Pietism, Rationalism set in. During the Rationalistic period the basic faith of the church went to ruins and with it unbelief became the dominant thought. The Christian message became nothing more than dry moralizing.

⁴²Christa Mueller, "Das Glaubens bekenntnes im Kirchenlied," Monatschrift fuer die Gottesdienst und Kirchliche Kunst (Juli, 1936), p. 161.

⁴³W. Rohnert, Unsere Kirchenliederdichter (Elberfeld: des Lutherischen Buechervereins, 1905), p. 24 f.

⁴⁴Phillips, op. cit., p. 119.

The fall of man, Christ's redemptive work were declared to be fables.⁴⁵

The hymnody of the period necessarily reflects the change. The old hymns were watered down to suit the new spirit. The new hymns were lyrics and odes rather than hymns in the old sense.⁴⁶ One of the leaders in this was Friedrich Klopstock, known as the "poet of pathos." He changed at least twenty-nine of the best hymns. The changes were for the most part, made in a tasteless manner. He, so to speak, "moralized" them. In place of the "Glaubenslieder," Klopstock substituted insipid "Morallieder."⁴⁷

What the Rationalists tried to do was to make the Christian faith pleasing (Mundgerecht). In reality what they did was to strip the hymns of their evangelical element, or of any other element which didn't square with reason and which could not be explained logically.⁴⁸ Thus during the Rationalistic Period "Durch Adams Fall" was mutilated at times beyond recognition. Even the title was changed to "Durch Adams Suende wurden wir auch sterblich, strafbar, Suender."⁴⁹ The text of Luther's hymn "Wir Glauben all an einen Gott" was among those corrupted in this period.

⁴⁵Rohnert, op. cit., p. 25.

⁴⁶Phillips, op. cit., p. 119 f.

⁴⁷Rohnert, op. cit., p. 26.

⁴⁸Nelle, op. cit., p. 200 f.

⁴⁹R. Schultz, Wanderung durch unser Gesangbuch (Strassburg: Selbstverlag des Herausgebers, 1876), I, 76.

Luther's text stated:

Der sich zum Vater geben hat,
Dasz wir Seine Kinder werden. . . .

The Rationalists altered it thusly:

Er unser Vater, unser Gott,
heiz uns seine Kinder werden!

This change, simple as it seems, corrupts the basic tenet of the gospel. It makes the work of redemption, in effect, not a gift of grace but a work of man, changing the gospel into a law.⁵⁰

The chorale "Gott sei gelobet und gebenedeiet," Luther's hymn on the blessed sacrament, though not completely deleted from rationalistic hymnals, was watered down to a point where it didn't convey the original intent of the author.⁵¹

In comparing the text of "Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ," and its later distortion, one sees that Rationalism avoids any contact with the "Word made flesh," the God-man Jesus Christ.⁵² The first four stanzas of the original text read:

Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ
dasz du Mensch geboran bist
von einer Jungfrau, das ist wahr,
des freuet sich der Engel Schaar:
Halleluja.

Des ewigen Vaters einig Kind
jetzt man in der Krippen findt:
in unser armes Fleisch und Blut
verkleidet sich das ewig Gut:
Halleluja.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 81 f.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 168.

⁵²Ibid., p. 9 f.

Den aller Weltkreis nie beschloz,
 der liegt in Marien Schoos
 Er is ein Kindlein worden klein,
 Der alle Ding erhaelt allein:
 Halleluja.

Das ewige Licht geht da herein,
 gibt der Welt ein neuen Schein;
 es leucht' wahl mitten in der Nacht
 und uns des Lichtes Kinder macht:
 Halleluja.

The rationalist text read:

Gelobet seist du Jesu Christ
 der du ein Mensch erworben bist,
 nun herrschest: damals warst wie wir:
 Anbetung, Preis und Dank sei dir
 Des hoechsten Sohn.

(Stanza two completely omitted).

(Stanza three completely omitted).

Die Nacht entflieht, der Tag bricht an,
 nun sei doch heilig Jedermann!
 auf die, die Finsternisz umgab,
 glaenzt aus der Hoehge nun herab
 der Seelen Licht.⁵³

In a recent article in the "Christian Century," the religious clime of the United States was characterized. The author pictured the piety of the American people so that it makes fellowship with the Lord sort of an intoxicating brew which puts them on an emotional jag and keeps them happy. "The 'gospel' makes them 'feel real good'."⁵⁴ Benson has pictured it in this manner:

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴A. Roy Eckardt, "The New Look in American Piety," The Christian Century (November 17, 1954), p. 1396.

The undeniable liking of the American people for light and catchy music readily cooperates with these graduates of the Sunday School in bringing to the church the kindred examples of what are called evangelistic songs. It is quite true that words set to these melodies are seldom more than verbal accompaniment to the tunes themselves. Only for some special inepititude or on some special occasion does anybody give much thought to them."⁵⁵

This reflexion on the religious and hymnological thinking of the people and culture is manifested in the hymns and songs which the people sing. For some time one of the favorite hymns of the American people has been "In the Garden."

I come to the garden alone,
While the dew is still on the roses,
And the voice I hear,
Falling on my ear,
The Son of God discloses.
And He walks with me and He talks with me,
And tells me I am His own;
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.⁵⁶

This is but a short step to the twentieth-century indictment of the United States piety which has been characterized as a divine hyman chumminess,⁵⁷ and which A. Roy Eckardt has described, in the aforementioned article, as follows:

The cult of the "man upstairs." A rhapsodic inquiry greets us from the T V screen and the radio: "Have you talked to the Man upstairs?"

⁵⁵Benson, op. cit., p. 131.

⁵⁶The Service Hymnal (Chicago: Hope Publishing Co., c.1935), #. 445.

⁵⁷Eckardt, op. cit., p. 1396.

God is a friendly neighbor who dwells in the apartment just above. Call on Him anytime: especially if you are feeling a little blue. He does not get upset over your little faults. He understands. We have been assured by no less a theologian than Jane Russell that the Lord is a "livin' Doll," a right nice guy. Thus is the citizenry guided to a divine human chumminess.⁵⁸

⁵⁸Ibid.

CHAPTER III

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GERMAN LUTHERAN CHORALE

German religious poetry had its start in the twelfth century. The German gods Wotan, Donar, and others were praised in hymns of this period. However, with the advent of Christianity into Germany, and with it the Latin language, the vernacular hymn was put to silence. The vernacular was used only for confession and preaching. The singing was done in Latin and the singers were the priests.¹ Not until later was the congregation permitted to sing during the Litany. This singing embraced the simple response: "Kyrie eleison! Christe eleison."² Still later the people would sing the "Krie eleison," in response to the Gospel or Epistle or perhaps some other portion of the Mass. Here do we find the incipient stages of the Lutheran Chorale.³ Gradually the "Kyrie" was augmented so that the end of the twelfth century the following verse was sung:

¹E. Sperber, Evangelischer Schul-Liederschatz: Die Entwicklung des deutsch-evangelischen Kirchenliedes (Guettersloh, Germany: C. Bertelsmann, 1901), II, 37.

²Ibid.

³Wilhelm Nelle, Geschichte des deutschen evangelischen Kirchenliedes (Hamburg: Gustav Schoessmann's Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1904), pp. 15 f.

Christus uns genade,
 Kyrie eleison
 Die Heiligen alle helfen uns!⁴

It is true that during the Middle Ages hymns were composed and sung. Many of these were translated and reworked in the Reformation Period and later. But these hymns for the most part were in the Latin and to bring German hymns into the service of the Mass in place of the Latin was strongly resisted by the hierarchy.⁵

On the whole this was the status quo until the time of the Reformation. However, during the fifteenth century to just before the Reformation the level of creative German poetry was at a low ebb. By the sixteenth century the term "deutscher Poet" designated a "Schimpfwort".⁶

The hymn designed to be sung in public worship was born with the German Reformation.⁷ The Reformation emphasis on the priesthood of all believers paved the way for congregational song.⁸ The people were to participate in the service. The people themselves should participate in the service in their own tongue with song and prayer. To this end Luther's work wended itself in three ways: first, Luther gave the Bible to the people in the vernacular; second, Luther translated the divine service into the ver-

⁴Sperber, op. cit., p. 38.

⁵Ibid., pp. 40 f.

⁶Ibid., pp. 103 f.

⁷A Dictionary of Hymnology, edited by John Julian (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1891), p. 412.

⁸Edward S. Ninds, Nineteen Centuries of Christian Song (New York: Fleming H. Revel Company, c.1938), p. 63.

nacular; third, Luther wrote and composed hymns which the people could sing. In so composing hymns, Luther set an example which stirred up many of his followers to write hymns.⁹ These hymns, Phillips concludes, are models of what hymns should be, whether represented by the simple forthright sturdiness of Luther, or by the mingled fervor and tenderness of Paul Gerhardt.¹⁰

Luther was not the father of the German hymn, nor would he want to be credited with this distinction. However, Luther did become the father of the evangelical hymn, and no one since him has succeeded as he did in putting into hymns the blessed freedom of the Christian man.¹¹ Many hymn writers followed Luther's example and further produced evangelical hymns.¹² Among these writers are Paul Eber, next to Luther perhaps the best poet of the Wittenberg School.¹³ There is also Paul Speratus and Paul Gerhardt, concerning whose hymns some say that in them the religious song of Germany "finds its purest and sweetest expression."¹⁴

The first period of the Chorale is the Period of the

⁹Sperber, op. cit., pp. 109 f.

¹⁰C. S. Phillips, Hymnody Past and Present (London: S. P. C. K., 1937), p. 101.

¹¹Friedrich Spitta, Die Lieder Luthers in ihrer Bedeutung fuer das evangelische Kirchenlied (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1905), p. 372.

¹²Johannes Wangemann, Kurze Geschichte des evangelischen Kirchenliedes (Treptow a. d. Rega: Julius Bockramm, 1855), p. 152.

¹³A Dictionary of Hymnology, p. 318.

¹⁴Phillips, op. cit., p. 113.

Reformation, which runs roughly from 1523-1560. It is a period characterized by its emphasis on the objective truths of salvation. The hymns of this period proclaimed the message of sin and grace.¹⁵ Furthermore, they were hymns that were "kirchliche volkslieder." They were indeed churchly because they spoke of the great fundamental truths of the Christian faith. It is as Koch says: "Kirliches Glaubens- und Bekenntnislied mit dem vorherrschenden Gepraege der Objektivitaet."¹⁶

Luther is the embodiment of the hymnody of his period. However, Luther was not only the pioneer or trail blazer, but also the foreshadower of later church hymnody. Luther's shadow and spirit hovers over all later church-hymnody and music.¹⁷ Needless to say, Luther had the most effect on the hymnody of the Church which bears his name. Benson says:

Like everything in Lutheran worship it [the hymnody] illustrated the conviction of its great founder that the supremacy of Scripture in Christian worship means that the worship must be a setting forth of Christ's gospel.

Upon that ideal the whole edifice of Lutheran hymnody rested.¹⁸

The first evangelical German hymnal was published in this period; it appeared in 1524 under the title:

¹⁵W. Rohnert, Unsere Kirchenliederdichter (Elberfeld: des Lutherischen Buechervereins, 1905), p. 21.

¹⁶Sperber, op. cit., p. 107.

¹⁷Nelle, op. cit., p. 24.

¹⁸Louis F. Benson, The Hymnody of the Christian Church (New York: George H. Doran Co., c.1927), p. 147 f.

Etliche Christlich lider, Lobgesang, und Psalm, dem reinen Wort Gottes gemess, ausz der heyligen schrift, durch mancherlei hochgelerten gemacht, in der Kirchen zu singen, wie es dann zum tayl berayt zu Wittenberg in uebung ist. Wittenberg 1524.¹⁹

By the time of Luther's death in 1546 there were about forty-seven evangelical hymnals extant and in use.²⁰

The second period of the Chorale runs roughly from 1560-1618, or from shortly after Luther's death to the beginning of the Thirty Years War. For the most part the Chorale in this period retained the objectivity of the previous period. However, it is marked at times with the beginnings of the subjective, and more often than not was marred by polemics and strong contention over purity of doctrine.²¹

This period, called the "Wartzeit," is a period marked by controversy and schism. The strife existed not only between Lutherans and the Reformed, but also within the ranks of Lutheranism itself. The major strife was centered in the Synergistic Controversy which held that the human will cooperated in conversion. Add to this the Crypto-Calvinistic Controversy, and other controversies which centered around numerous perversions.²² Later followed what has been termed, "dead orthodoxy." This is the label attached to this period.

¹⁹Sperber, op. cit., p. 128.

²⁰Ibid., p. 129.

²¹Rohnert, op. cit., p. 22.

²²Sperber, op. cit., pp. 162 f.

In the struggle for pure doctrine the strife became so contentious that the learned theologians who struggled found themselves further away from truth than the common people.²³ In such a period of conflict and strife it was almost impossible to compose fresh hymns. Most of the hymns of this period are dry treatments of the Gospels, Epistles or Psalms put into prosaic verse.²⁴

The period possessed very little creative power and produced practically no jubilant hymns, notably hymns for the great feast days of the church. Between 1560 and 1648 not one notable hymn of praise was composed for Christmas. In addition, there was a dearth of hymns for Passiontide, Easter, or Pentecost.²⁵

Nevertheless, in this stagnant period some good hymns were produced. Men like Selnecker, Ringwaldt, and others showed that even in a period of strife may one find hearts that beat true. Their hymns give ample testimony to this fact.²⁶

The third, and last, period which comes in for discussion is bounded from 1618-1676, or from the beginning of the Thirty-Years War to the death of Paul Gerhardt. Hymns of this period follow the rules of composition set down by Martin Opitz. Through the influence of Opitz,

²³Wangemann, op. cit., p. 211.

²⁴Ibid., p. 216.

²⁵Nelle, op. cit., p. 79.

²⁶Wangemann, op. cit., p. 216.

hymnody lost its objective character; it was replaced by hymnody of a subjective nature. Hymns took on a quality which was permeated with the feeling and experience of the poet.²⁷ This period, however, produced Paul Gerhardt, who has been called the "prince" of sacred poets and who is outranked in popularity only by Luther.²⁸

Primarily two forces or circumstances shaped the hymnody and also the form of the hymnody of this period: one was the inside force within the heart, the unspeakable suffering and hardship endured through the war; the other was the external force which determined new rules governing the form of poetry.²⁹ The times changed. New challenges; a different atmosphere; the attack came from a different quarter and Lutheran hymnody reflects it.

Derselbe Glaube, der fruher in gewaltig erregter Volksgemeinschaft, in vollen Kirchen, auf den Maerkten seine Kampfeslieder gesungen, singt jetzt in stiller Kammer seine Morgen- und Abendlieder, auf der Wanderung aus der von Feinden verwusteten Heimat seine Kreuz- und Trostlieder, bei der Rueckkehr vom Friedhof, der kaum die Toten fassen kann, seine Sterblieder.³⁰

Paul Gerhardt was the most outstanding hymnographer of the period.³¹ Other hymn writers of the period of note are: Michael Schirmer, Johannes Clearius, Johann Rist,

²⁷Rohnert, op. cit., p. 23.

²⁸Ninde, op. cit., p. 68.

²⁹Sperber, op. cit., p. 182.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Phillips, op. cit., p. 113.

Johannes Heermann, and Simon Dach.³²

In the hymns of this period the subjective and mystical element becomes vocal and marked. The "churchly" and "confessional" element sinks into the background. But fervor and tenderness have not yet degenerated into sentimentality.³³ X

With Paul Gerhardt closes the era of strongly objective and doctrinal hymnody. He at the same time opened an era which in its hymns expressed the individual's faith and experience, the subjective element.³⁴ This element is to be noted in

part in Gerhardt's treatment of Heyden's hymn "O Mensch beweyn deyn Suende gross." Heyden wrote:

O Mensch beweyn deyn suende gross,
 Darumb Christus seyns Vatters schosz
 Eussert und kam auff erden;
 Von einer Junckfraw reyn und zart
 Fuer uns er hie geporen ward,
 Er wolt der mitler werden.
 Den todten er das leben gab
 Und legt darbey all kranckheyt ab,
 Bisz sich die zeyt her trange,
 Das er fuer uns geopffert wurd,
 Truef unser suenden schwere buerd
 Wol an dem Creutze lange.

Gerhardt reworks this first stanza in this manner:

O Mensch bewein dein Suend,
 Um welcher willen Gottes Kind
 Ein Mensche musste werden.
 Er kam von seines Vaters Thron,
 Ward einer armen Jungfrau Sohn,
 That groaze Ding auf Erden:

³²Wangemann, op. cit., p. 243.

³³Phillips, op. cit., p. 113.

³⁴Sperber, op. cit., p. 213.

Die Kranken macht er frisch und stark
 Und risse, was schon lag im Sarg,
 Dem Tod aus seinem Rachen,
 Bis dasz er selbst durch Feindes Haend
 Am Kreuze seines Lebens End
 In Schmerzen muszte machen.³⁵

Sperber says of Gerhardt:

Er stand noch fest auf dem Grunde des Kirchlichen Bekenntnisses, und Luthers Kraeftiger Geist lebt in ihm fort; dabei hatte er aber die hoehere poetische Bildung seiner Zeit ererbt. So erreichte in ihm die seltere Richtung, in der das Kirchenlied vorherrschend das Gepraege der objektiven Kirchlichkeit hat, ihre hoechste Vollendung, zugleich aber hat in ihm die neuere Schule der subjektiv lyrischen Dichtung ihren Anfangspunkt. Er is objektiv kirchlich und subjektiv lyrisch zugleich und so den Janusbilde aehnlich, das rueckwaerts in die alte und vorwaerts in die neue Zeitentwicklung schaut.³⁶

The beginnings of Pietism asserted themselves in the hymnody of the Lutheran Church in Germany already in 1648, although its roots go back even further. By 1675 Pietism dominated evangelical hymnody and from 1675 on Pietism is its governing force.³⁷ This period, namely the period of the Thirty Years War and the Pietistic Era really closes the era of the true German Chorale. After the era of Gerhardt, the dawn of Pietism influenced the hymnody of the day; it was followed by the influence of Rationalism which swept the whole continent, and which set about to strip the Chorale of its evangelical character.³⁸

³⁵Albert F. W. Fischer (ed.), Kirchenlieder-Lexicon, (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1878), I, 194.

³⁶Sperber, op. cit., p. 212.

³⁷Nelle, op. cit., p. 87.

³⁸Sperber, op. cit., pp. 225-305.

Sources of the Chorales

Luther gave to the hymnological heritage of the church a total of thirty-six hymns. All of these were not new hymns. Luther took the basis of his hymns from many sources. In some instances he took old Latin hymns, translated them, and often reworked them. He also took some of his hymns from the literature of German sacred folksongs, reworked them, and in many cases expanded them. But, regardless of their source, his chorales were composed and written with the intent to meet the needs of the people and to put into song the gospel message.³⁹ The Reformation gave us new hymns, but the new song was not revolutionary, for whatever had been true and beautiful in the worship and hymnody of the church was preserved. Reformation hymns are universal in their value and convey their evangelical message to all posterity.⁴⁰ Luther, and for that matter the majority of his hymnological successors, rejected nothing simply because it came from the Church of Rome. Luther was a purifier not a destroyer; thus many of his hymns are based on old Latin, medieval hymns. However, all the hymns that he wrote breathed the spirit of the Gospel.⁴¹ The same can be said of the other evangelical hymn-writers in Germany.⁴²

³⁹Ibid., p. 113.

⁴⁰James F. Lambert, Luther's Hymns (Philadelphia: General Council Publication House, c.1917), p. xvii.

⁴¹Ninde, op. cit., pp. 58 f.

⁴²Paul Gabriel, Das Deutsches Evangelische Kirchenlied von Martin Luther bis zur Gegenwart, zweite, erweiterte Auflage (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1951), p. 18.

The hymn "Verleih uns frieden gnaediglich" is a free translation of an old Latin antiphon, "Antiphona pro pace" of the sixth century.⁴³ The hymn "Mitten wir im Leben sind" is based on an old Latin hymn, composed by Norker Balbulus in the early tenth century. This hymn had been in current use in an old German translation already in 1514. It was this version which Luther probably used as the basis of his hymn. The old Latin text read:

Media vita in Morte sumus,
 quem qaerimus adiutorem
 nisi te, domine?
 Qui pro peccatis nostris
 juste irascaris.
 Sancte deus,
 sancte fortis,
 sancte et misericors salvator
 amarae morti ne tradas nos.

The old German version of 1514 read:

In mittel unsers lebens Zeyt
 im tod seind wir umbfangen:
 Wen suchen wir, der unsz hilffe geyt,
 von dem wir huld erlangen,
 denn dich, herr alleine?
 der du umb unser missetat
 rechtlichen zuernen thust.
 Heilliger herre gott,
 Heilliger starker gott,
 Heilliger und barmherziger Heiler ewiger got,
 lasz uns nit gewalt thun des bittern tods not.⁴⁴

Luther's hymn finally had it read thus:

Mitten wir im Leben sind
 Mit dem Tod umfangen.
 Wen suchen wir, der Hilfe tu,
 Dass wir Gnad erlangen?

⁴³Martin Luther, Geistliche Lieder (Muenchen: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1950), pp. 98 f.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 68 f.

Das bist du, Herr alleine.
 uns reuet unser Missetat,
 Die dich, Herr, ermuernet hat.
 Heiliger Herre Gott,
 Heiliger starker Gott,
 Heiliger barmherziger Heiland, du ewiger Gott,
 Lass uns nicht versinken in des bitteren Todes Nct.
 Kyrieleison.⁴⁵

Other evangelical hymn writers followed Luther's example. Decius' hymn "O Lamm Gottes unschuldig" is based upon the "Agnus Dei" of the Mass.⁴⁶ Ringwaldt's hymn "Es ist gewisslich an der Zeit" is based on the thirteenth century Latin sequence hymn of Thomas von Celano, "Dies irae, dies illa." Sperber quotes this sequence hymn in the German. It reads in part:

Tag des Zorns, O Tag voll grauen
 da die Welt den Herrn soll schauen,
 nach dem Wort, dem wir vertrauen.

Zittern in die Erde Gruenden
 Wird des Lichtes Nah'n verkuenden,
 der die herzens will ergruenden.

Wunderbar Posaunenkollen
 wird durch jedes Grab erschallen,
 auf, zum Throne! rufend allen.⁴⁷

Ringwaldt's reworking of the hymn reads again in part:

Es ist gewiszlich an der Zeit,
 dasz Gottes Sohn wird kommen
 in seiner grossen Herrlichkeit,
 zu richten Boes' und Frommen.
 Dann wird das Lachen werden teu'r
 wenn alles wird vergehn in Feu'r
 wie Petrus davon schreibt.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 20.

⁴⁶R. Schultz, Wanderung durch unser Gesangbuch (Strassburg: Selbstverlag des Herausgebers, 1876), p. 31.

⁴⁷Sperber, op. cit., pp. 50 f.

Posaunen wird man hoeren
 gehn an aller Welt ihr Ende,
 darauf bald werden auferstehn
 all' Toten gar behende;
 die aber noch das Leben han,
 die wird der Herr von Stunden an
 verwandeln und verneuen.⁴⁸

One of Gerhardt's best known hymns, a hymn which vividly depicts the passion and death of Jesus Christ, "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden" is based upon St. Bernard's passion hymn "Salve caput cruentatum." St. Bernard's text in German translation reads:

Sei gegrueszt, o haupt voll Wunden,
 mit der Dornenkron gebunden,
 blutumflossen, voller Plagen,
 met dem Rohre frech geschlagen
 und von des Speichels Schmach bedeckt.⁴⁹

Gerhardt's version of the same stanza, the first, reads:

O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden,
 voll Schmerz und voller Hohn,
 o Haupt, zum Spott gebunden,
 mit einer Dornenkron'
 o Haupt, sonst schoen gezieret
 mit hoechster Ehr' und Zier,
 jetzt aber hoechst schimpfieret:
 gegrueszet sei'st du me!⁵⁰

Luther based some of his hymns on the Psalms. Among them was the hymn "Aus tiefer Not," which Luther based on Psalm 130.⁵¹

It is to be noted that Luther took profane poetry or song as a basis for some of his hymns. Among

⁴⁸Kirchengesangbuch fuer Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemein-
den (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, nd.), p. 320.

⁴⁹Sperber, op. cit., p. 35.

⁵⁰Kirchengesangbuch, pp. 55 f.

⁵¹Luther, op. cit., p. 59.

these is "Vom Himmel hoch," of which at least the first stanza is from a folkgame song (Ringtanzlied). The original read:

Ich komm aus fremden Landen her
und bring euch viel der neuen Maer,
der neuen Maer bring ich so viel,
Mehr denn ich hier sagen will.⁵²

Luther revised it and adapted it so that it read:

Vom Himmel hoch da komm ich her,
Ich bring auch gute neue Maer,
Der guten Maer bring ich so viel
Davon ich singen und sagen will.⁵³

It was in this way that Luther and those who followed in his train carried out what he had expressed in his letter to Spalatin in 1523:

It is my plan . . . to make vernacular psalms for the people We seek everywhere for poets. And as you have such skill and practice in the German tongue, I entreat you to work with us in this matter and to turn one of the psalms into a hymn after the pattern of an effort of my own that I have sent you. But I desire that new-fangled and courtly expressions may be avoided and that the words may all be exceedingly simple and common, such as plain folk may understand, yet withal pure and skilfully handled.⁵⁴

⁵²Ibid., p. 105.

⁵³Ibid., p. 40.

⁵⁴Phillips, op. cit., p. 108.

CHAPTER IV

SOTERIOLOGY OF THE LUTHERAN CHORALE

Through his hymns Luther wished above all to put God's holy word into the hearts of men. Hymns should go hand in hand with the preached word, propel and bring into vogue the Holy Gospel. Thus the fundamental basis of Luther's hymns and those of his fellow reformers was that through hymns the Gospel might be proclaimed.¹ Luther's thoughts on the objectives of Christian hymnody might well be summed up in the following quote, from his Forward to the Babstschen Gesangbuch:

x Gott hat unser Herz und Mut froehlich gemacht durch seinen lieben Sohn, welchen er fuer uns gegeben hat zur Erloesung von Suenden, Tod und Teufel. Wer solches mit Ernst glaeubet, der kann nicht lassen: er muss froehlich und mit Lust davon singen und sagen, dass es andre auch hoeren und herzukommen.²

It was through Luther that the doctrine of justification by grace alone was brought out in all its fulness and glory.³ Through Luther and the Reformation arose a hymnody which stressed salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus.⁴

¹Oskar Soehngen, Die Zukunft des Gesangbuches, Merseburger edition (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, n.d.), p. 14.

²Ibid., pp. 13 f.

³W. Rohnert, Unsere Kirchenliederdichter (Elberfeld: des Lutherischen Buechervereins, 1905), p. 138.

⁴E. Sperber, Evangelischer Schul-Liederschatz: Die Entwicklung des deutsch-evangelischen Kirchenliedes (Guetterslok, Germany: C. Bertelsmann, 1901), II, 104 f.

It was the conviction of Luther and the reformers that the salvation which was now brought to all men should bring forth a new song. Luther says:

Wer aber nicht davon singen und sagen will, das ist ein Zeichen, dass ers nicht glaebet und nicht ins neu froehliche Testament, sondern unter das alte, faule, unlustige Testament gehoert.⁵

Luther would not be Luther if he also, in his hymns, would not permeate his hymns with the theme of the Reformation, of justification by grace without the deeds of the law.⁶ From this consciousness that Christ had redeemed mankind streamed joyful strains of salvation in new hymns. Sperber says:

Ein neues Lied musste das Kirchenlied durch die Reformation werden, es konnte nicht anders sein. Der Schrecken der Suende, die Angst der Gewissen, die Not des Herzens waren als die drueckenden Fesseln zerbrochen.⁷

In Luther's hymns appears the full message of the Gospel. His hymns were mighty and through them the evangelical truth sang its way into the hearts of the people.⁸

Luther's hymns are typical of evangelical hymnody.⁹

⁵ Ibid., p. 105.

⁶ Paul Gabriel, Das Deutsche Evangelische Kirchenlied von Martin Luther bis zur Gegenwart, zweite, erweiterte Auflage (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1951), p. 25.

⁷ Sperber, op. cit., pp. 105 f.

⁸ James Lambert, Luther's Hymns (Philadelphia: General Council Publication House, c.1917), p. xvii.

⁹ Friedrich Spitta, Die Lieder Luthers in ihrer Bedeutung fuer das evangelische Kirchenlied (Goettingen: Vandenhoech und Ruprecht, 1905), p. 385.

They breathe the bold, confident, joyful spirit of the same justifying faith which was the beating heart of his theology and piety.¹⁰ Furthermore, Luther's hymns inspired subsequent hymn writers of the evangelical faith.¹¹ During the Reformation period there appeared various writers who wrote hymns in the spirit of the Reformation.¹² Among them was Paul Speratus and, "Seine Lieder sind hinreichende Zeugnisse fuer seine glaubentreue und siegesgewisse Unerschrockenheit im Kampfe fuer die Wahrheit."¹³

This evangelical strain remained in evangelical hymnody from Luther to Gerhardt and beyond. In Gerhardt's hymns, "das 'sola fide' blickt in all seinem Singen mit seinem tiefen ernstestem Auge durch." However it does not shine through in the same manner as it does in the Paul Speratus'

Es ist das Heil uns kommen her
aus Gnad' und lauter Guete,
die Werke helfen nimmermehr,
sie moegen nicht behueten.

Gerhardt met a different situation and put it this way:

Sein Sohn ist ihm nicht zu teuer,
Nein, er gibt ihn fuer mich hin,
dass er mich vom ew'gen Feuer
durch sein teures Blut gewinn!¹⁴

¹⁰A Dictionary of Hymnology, John Julian editor (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1891), p. 414.

¹¹Lambert, op. cit., p. xviii.

¹²Edward S. Ninde, Nineteen Centuries of Christian Song (New York: Fleming H. Revel Company, c.1938), p. 63.

¹³Otto Schulze, Ausfuhrlicher Erklarung der achtzig Kirchenlieder, sechste Ausgabe (Berlin: I. A. Wohlgenuth's Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1879), p. 79.

¹⁴Karl Hesselbacher, Paul Gerhardt (Leipzig und Hamburg: Gustav Schloessmanns Verlagsbuchhandlung, c.1936), pp. 179 f.

We quote Hesselbacher: "Gerhardt hat das Kreuz auf Golgatha in den mächtigsten Liedern der evangelischen Christenheit besungen."¹⁵ And what has been termed as Gerhardt's optimism is in truth nothing else than his complete dependence on the truth of the Word of God, the Bible.¹⁶

Thus it is that Nelle concludes that the theme of all Lutheran Chorales is the exclamation of the redeemed to their Redeemer, "For I am Yours and You are mine."¹⁷

The Reformation Period

Both the Reformation and the hymn of its period stressed the following three emphases: 1. the recognition of man's sinfulness and the acquiring of salvation by divine grace; 2. this salvation is obtained through faith in the only Mediator, Jesus Christ; 3. stress of supremacy of the Scriptures, which were placed into the hands of the people in the vernacular.¹⁸ The hymn of this period sings its message not in the past tense but in the present. "Jetzt," "heute," "nun," are sprinkled into the texts, e.g. "Nun freut' euch lieben christen G'mein." For the proclamation of the incarnation declares that salvation is at hand. Christ comes

¹⁵Ibid., p. 176.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 171.

¹⁷Wilhelm Nelle, Geschichte des deutschen evangelischen Kirchenliedes (Hamburg: Gustav Schloessmanns Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1904), p. 35.

¹⁸Sperber, op. cit., pp. 104 f.

also today to teach and to comfort. Christ is to be met with the repentant turning of the heart and the repentant heart is met with Christ's forgiving grace.¹⁹ Mueller writes: "Unsere Kirchenlieder wissen davon zu sagen und zu singen: dass gerade in der Schmach des Kreuzes-todes Gott seine allmaechtige Hand erweist:

Wir danken dir, Herr Jesu Christ
dass du fuer uns gestorben bist. . .
Und bitten dich, wahr Mensch und Gott,
durch deine heiligen Wunden rot. . .
behuet uns auch vor Suend und Schand,
und reich uns dein allmaechtige Hand,
dass wir im Kreuz geduldig sein,
uns troesten deiner schweren Pein."²⁰

The Reformation period placed the basis of this faith completely upon God and His Word. It relied for its salvation entirely upon the grace of God. This became the fundamental tone of Luther's hymns and of all true Lutheran hymns written ever since.

Halt uns bei festem Glauben
und auf dich lass uns bauen
aus Herzengrund vertrauen,
dir uns lassen ganz und gar. . .²¹

Strictly speaking, Luther wrote no Passion hymn. In his hymnody he stressed the "vivit," "er lebt." Nevertheless, it is equally true that the cross always stood out in his singing and speaking. His theology of the cross is the

¹⁹Karl Hauschildt, Die Christusverkuendigung im Weihnachtlied unserer Kirche (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1952), p. 62.

²⁰Christa Mueller, "Das Glaubensbekenntnis im Kirchenlied," Monatschrift fuer die Gottesdienst und Kirchliche Kunst (Juli, 1936), p. 120.

²¹Op. cit., (Februar-Maerz, 1936), p. 37.

strength of all his joyous faith. In his "Deutsche Messe," the "Lamb of God that bears the sins of the world" found its place.²²

When it is said that the term "Jesus" is seldom used in the hymnody of the Reformation era it should not be construed that the writers of this period knew nothing of love toward Christ. "Jesus" in the hymnody of this period signified our Lord and the Savior as man. Thus, the term was never isolated; it was always used in conjunction with "Christus."²³ In the term "Jesus Christus" the hymn writers of this period comprehended and signified that Jesus Christ was true God and true man. Eber expresses this, "Herr Jesu Christ, wahr Mensch und Gott." It rings through Luther's "Christ lag in Todesbanden," as it does in the Easter hymn of another writer, "Wir danken dir, Herr Jesu Christ."²⁴ By addressing their hymns to "Jesus Christus" the intent of the hymn writer was to express a confession concerning Christ. "Jesus" signified manhood or humanity of Christ. "Christus" stressed his deity. The combination emphasized that this was the God-man, the mediator between God and man, between heaven and earth.

In dem Namen 'Jesus Christus' liegt fuer die Christliche Kirche beschlossen, dass Er ihr Lehrer und Prophet, ihr Versoehner und Priester, ihr Erloeser und Koenig sei.²⁵

²²Hesselbacher, op. cit., p. 176.

²³Mueller, op. cit., (Juli, 1936), p. 162.

²⁴Ibid., p. 164.

²⁵Ibid., p. 161.

Although some would say that the hymns of the Reformation period are overly dogmatic, yet we find that they embrace the faith and truth of the writers who expressed in them the deeds of Redemption, particularly the tenet that man is justified through faith alone. In places where the pure evangelical hymn tradition has been preserved, these hymns still hold an esteemed place.²⁶

a. Nun freut euch lieben Christen G'mein 7LH 387

"Healthy the people that can rejoice." The Lutheran Christians of the Reformation period could and did rejoice as no people ever had before. The fountains of the Gospel were again uncovered. God spoke to His people through the open Bible. And the answer to this word was a full and holy song in which the joy over the grace of God in Christ broke forth in renewed jubilation. Truly the keynote of the period was expressed in Luther's "Nun freut euch liebe Christen G'mein und laszt uns froehlich springen."²⁷

Luther sang the praises of divine grace. By this grace he received the Gospel directly from God. The result was the hymn "Nun freut euch, lieben Christen G'mein." in which Luther describes how Christ had freed him from anxiety caused by his efforts to rid himself of the doctrine of meritorious works.²⁸ Fischer calls this chorale,

²⁶Kirchenlieder-Lexicon, Albert F. W. Fischer, editor, (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1878), I, 144.

²⁷Nelle, op. cit., p. 23.

²⁸Lambert, op. cit., p. 77.

Die erste Stimme deutschen Kirchengesangs, die mit Blitzesgewalt durch alle deutsche Lande fuhr, ein Preis des ewigen goettlichen Rattschlusses der Erloesung des Menschengeschlechts und des Evangeliums der Freiheit.²⁹

Soehngen calls it, an "epische Darstellung von Christi Heilswerk."³⁰ And Thilemann Heshusius says of it:

Hier is das groeszte des Kirchenliedes geleistet: die Erloesungsgeschichte von dem ewigen Rattschluss Gott an bis zur Zeitlichen Erscheinung des Erloesers ist vollstaendig inneres Erlebnes innere Geschichte geworden; . . .³¹

This chorale expresses the sum of Luther's theology. Heren pounds the heart of faith, a faith which confesses that "God so loved thw world that he gave His only begotten Son."³²

The content of this hymn is best expressed as:

× Der Rattschluss Gottes zu unserer Erloesung durch Jesum Christum und derselben im Glauben.³³

Stanza one of the hymn praises God for the victory secured through His Son.³⁴ It is a song of thanks and praise to God for His "suesze Wunderthat," namely, the work of redemption: it speaks of what our gain or acquisition had cost Him, even the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ.³⁵ The first stanza reads:

²⁹Kirchenlieder-Lexicon, II, p. 106.

³⁰Soehngen, op. cit., p. 15.

³¹Sperber, op. cit., pp. 116 f.

³²R. Schultz, Wanderung durch unser Gesangbuch (Strassburg: Selbstverlag des Herausgebers, 1876), I, 100.

³³Schulze, op. cit., p. 80.

³⁴Lambert, op. cit., p. 78.

³⁵Schulze, Ibid.

Nun freut euch, liebe Christen g'mein,
 und laszt uns froehlich springen,
 dass wir getrost und all' in ein
 mit Lust und Liebe singen,
 was Gott an uns gewendet hat,
 und seine suesze Wundertat;
 gar teu'r hat er's erworben.³⁶

Stanza three:

Mein' gute Werk', die galten nicht,
 es war mit ihn'n verdorben;
 der frei' Will' haszte Gott's Gericht,
 er war zum Gut'n erstorben.
 Die Angst mich zu verzweifeln trieb,
 dass nichts denn Sterben bei mir blieb,
 zur Hoelle muszt' ich sinken.

In stanza two, in which Luther discusses the state of man after the fall and before the redemption, Luther tells of soteriology from a negative point of view. Good works are out of the question, for mankind is completely corrupt, polluted, and defiled. In such a condition man stands under the judgement of God, a judgement of death and hell. Upon this basis Luther proclaims in the following stanza, his own confidence, and tells of God's decree of salvation.³⁷

Stanza four:

Da jammert' Gott in Ewigkeit
 mein Elend uebermazen,
 er dacht' an sein' Barmherzigkeit,
 er wollt' mir helfen lassen;
 er wandt' zu mir das Vaterherz,
 es war bei ihm fuerwahr kein Schmerz,
 er liesz's sein Bestes kosten.

God laments the sinful state of man, he laments from eternity

³⁶Kirchengesangbuch fuer Evangelisch-Lutherische
 Gemeinden (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.),
 pp. 172 f.

³⁷Schulze, op. cit., p. 81.

and turns to man His "Vaterherz," and this turning cost Him His best, namely, His Son Jesus Christ.³⁸

This "best" referred to in stanza four was God's beloved Son upon whom the responsibility of carrying out God's decree of Salvation was placed. In stanza five the poet refers to Jesus as "the crown of His heart;" this is intended to stress just how dear and priceless His Son was to Him. The salvation which Christ merited for man brought help from the anguish of sin and saved us from bitter death.³⁹

Er sprach zu seinem lieben Sohn:
Die Zeit is hier zu'r barmen;
fahr hin, mein's Herzens werte Kron',
und sei has Heil dem Armen
und hilf ihm aus der Suendennot,
erwueg' fuer ihn den bittern Tod
und lass ihn mit dir leben!

In stanzas six through eight, Luther describes the work of Redemption, wrought by Jesus Christ.⁴⁰ Beginning with stanza seven Luther has Christ speak in direct discourse, describing what He, the Redeemer, will do. "Halte dich nur an mich," believe on me, trust in me, for now that which you so long strive for is attainable. Through Christ's grappling with death and through His victory over death, mankind is His and He is theirs and no demoniac power can separate them.⁴¹ Stanza seven and eight read:

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Lambert, op. cit., p. 78.

⁴¹ Schulze, op. cit., p. 82.

Er sprach zu mir: Halt dich an mich,
 es soll dir jetzt, gelingen;
 ich geb' mich selber ganz fuer dich,
 da will ich fuer dich ringen;
 denn ich bin dein und du bist mein,
 und wo ich bleib', da sollst du sein,
 uns soll der Feind nicht scheiden.

Vergiesen wird er mir mein Blut
 dazu mein Leben rauben;
 das leid' ich alles dir zugut.
 Das halt mit festem Glauben!
 Den Tod verschlingt das Leben mein,
 mein' Unschuld traegt die Suende dein:
 da bist du selig worden.

Thus Luther tells us that through Christ's redemption, through Christ's blood the foe is defeated. Sin is forgiven and death is swallowed up so that death's power can have no more dominion over man again. "So ist denn durch den Kreuzestod Jesu und durch seine Auferstehung der Ratschluss des Heils vollendet."⁴²

On the basis of the stanzas quoted, the soteriological content of this chorale may thus be summed up. Man in his lost state is hopeless and defiled, good works will avail nothing. The Redemption is an act of God, initiated by God, who out of mercy gives His only Son. This Son is Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for our sins. And it is through this suffering and death that sin is forgiven and death is conquered. Sin is forgiven and life given in place of death to those who cling to and have faith in the merit and work of Jesus Christ. Thus salvation is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. Wangemann sum-

⁴²Ibid.

marizes it in these words: In this hymn Luther

hat dem ganzen Grund christlichen Glaubens und christlicher Lehre, christlichen Lebens und christlichen Hoffens hineingedichtet.⁴³

B. Aus tiefer Not

Luther based this chorale on Psalm 130, a Psalm which Luther classed among the Pauline Psalms. The hymn breathes sentiments which compel the reader to join in prayer, confession, and faith.⁴⁴ In his reworking of this Psalm and adapting it for use as a hymn, Luther gave this Psalm a Pauline interpretation. On this basis he made the hymn an exposition of the evangelical doctrine of justification by grace alone.⁴⁵ This doctrine, which is the keystone of the evangelical church is also the basic thought of "Aus tiefer Not." Sperber says, "It is the cry of a fearful but not doubtful heart for the grace of God."⁴⁶ The content of this hymn has been expressed by Schulze as, "Der Gebetsruf eines um der Sünde willen geangsteten, aber auf die Gnade Gottes vertrauenden Herzens." Stanza one is a lament over sinfulness. Stanza two follows with a look toward the grace of

⁴³Johannes Wangemann, Kurze Geschichte des evangelischen Kirchenliedes (Treptow a. d. Rega: Julius Bockramm, 1855), pp. 139 f.

⁴⁴Lambert, op. cit., p. 31.

⁴⁵Spitta, op. cit., p. 25.

⁴⁶Sperber, op. cit., p. 118.

God, and not on one's own merits.⁴⁷

Aus tiefer Not schrei' ich zu dir,
Herr Gott, erhoer' sein Rufen;
Dein' gnaedig' Ohren kehr' zu mir
und meiner Bitt sie oeffen!
Denn so du willst das sehen an
was Suend' und Unrecht is getan,
wer kann, Herr, vor dir bleiben?

Bei dir gilt nichts denn Gnad' und Gunst,
die Suende zu vergeben;
es ist doch unser Tun umsonst
auch in dem besten Leben.
Vor dir niemand sich ruehmen kann,
des musz dich fuerchten jedermann
und deiner Gnade leben.⁴⁸

Schulze says that this stanza tells of the trusting upon the grace of God for forgiveness, who alone can forgive sin and that out of free grace. It is folly to try through our own merits to earn this grace and thus seek to appear justified before God, for before God no one can glory in his own merit or works.⁴⁹ Luther's own commentary on this stanza reads:

Es ist hie die Meinung, weil sonst nirgends Vergebung der Suenden zu finden is, denn bei Dir, so muessen sie wohl alle Abgoetterei fahren lassen, und thun's gern, dasz sie sich vor Dir buecken tucken, zum Kreuz kriechen und allein Dich in Ehren halten und zu Dir zuflucht haben und Dir dienen, als die Diener Gnade leben und nicht ihrer eigenen Gerechtigkeit.⁵⁰

Having thus expressed the hopelessness and futility of trusting in ones own merits, Luther, in stanzas three and four, places all his hope upon God and His grace. This hope must be constant, and should be longed for even as they that

⁴⁷Schulze. op. cit., p. 72.

⁴⁸Kirchengesangbuch, pp. 146 f.

⁴⁹Schulze, op. cit., p. 72.

⁵⁰Ibid.

watch for the morning. Israel waits upon the Lord; this is the spiritual Israel, all those who through faith have embraced Christ the Redeemer. This is the congregation of the faithful. The congregation of those who have been born again.⁵¹

Darum auf Gott will hoffen ich,
auf mein Verdienst nicht bauen;
auf ihn mein Herz soll lassen sich
und seiner Guete trauen,
die mir zusagt sein wertest Wort,
das ist mein Trost und treuer Hort,
des will ich allzeit harren.

Und ob es waehrt bis in die Nacht
und wieder an den Morgen,
doch soll mein Herz an Gottes Macht
verzweifeln nicht noch sorgen.
So tu' Israel rechter Art,
der aus dem Geist erzeuget ward
und seines Gott's erharre.

Out of the hope upon the grace of God springs certainty. The penitent sinner who cries for God's help experiences it. God's hand is never too short to help. To the sinner comes the Good Shepherd who redeems all believers, forgives their sin in His blood, and gives to them the inheritance of the blessed.⁵² This is what Luther includes in stanza five when he writes:

Ob bei uns ist der Suende viel,
bei Gott ist viel mehr Gnade,
sein' Hand zu helfen had kein Ziel,
wie gross auch sei der Schade.
Er ist allein der gute Hirt,
der Israel erloesen wird
aus seinen Suenden allen.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 73.

⁵²Ibid.

This chorale appeared in the "Strassburger Kirchengesangbuch" of 1541 under this superscription:

Ein Klag- und Betsalm um Verzeihung der Sunden
mit troestlicher Bekenntnisz des Glaubens und
beharrlichen Vertrauen auf die Gnade und Guete
Gottes.⁵³

The soteriological content of this chorale may be summed up as follows: With all our works we have nothing, they are futile and damning. All that counts is God's grace and faith in Christ, the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep. The certainty of this salvation is revealed to man in God's word, where man gains assurance that by grace through faith all who are oppressed by sin gain forgiveness and life.⁵⁴

c. Es wollt uns Gott genaedig sein 500

This hymn by Luther is a "Mission" hymn. It is a prayer that God would make known the way of salvation to the heathen. It is a prayer that the heathen might come to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Redeemer and that through this recognition they might turn to God.⁵⁵ Stanza one reads:

Es woll' uns Gott genaedig sein
und seinen Segen geben;
sein Antlitz uns mit hellem Schein
erleucht' zum ew'gen Leben,
dass wir erkennen seine Werk',

⁵³Schultz, op. cit., p. 88.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Schultz, op. cit., p. 226.

und was ihm liebt auf Erden,
 und Jesus Christus Heil und Staerk'
 bekannt den Heiden werden
 und sie zu Gott bekehren.⁵⁶

God again is pictured as the initiator of salvation for mankind. It is God's countenance which leads us to eternal life by causing us to know the work which He accomplished through Jesus Christ, the Savior and Strength of mankind, the only Hope of the heathen if they too would be saved.

d. Nun bitten wir den Heiligen Geist 231

This chorale utters a prayer to the Holy Ghost for true faith,⁵⁷ faith in the merits and work of Christ the Savior. The first stanza of this hymn existed as an old Latin hymn; to this Luther added three stanzas which are Luther's commentary and exposition of stanza one.⁵⁸ Stanza one of the text bids that, above all, the Holy Spirit would give us a true faith, (rechten Glauben). This true, or correct, faith is further defined in stanza two.

Du wertest Licht, gib uns deinen Schein,
 lehr' uns Jesum Christ kennen allein,
 dasz wir an ihm bleiben,
 dem treuen Heiland,
 der uns bracht hat zum rechten Vaterland.
 Kyrieles.⁵⁹

Here we see that Luther emphasizes that the Holy Ghost works both, true faith and enlightenment. The enlightening of the

⁵⁶Kirchengesangbuch, p. 116.

⁵⁷Schultz, op. cit., p. 58.

⁵⁸Schultz, op. cit., p. 207.

⁵⁹Kirchengesangbuch, p. 91.

Holy Ghost works faith and true knowledge of Jesus Christ, in whom is to be found the "true Savior," who brought us to the "true fatherland" and thus won for us heaven and its blessedness.⁶⁰

e. Wenn wir in hoechsten Noeten sein

TUH 522

Next to Luther, Paul Eber was the most famous of the Wittenberg hymn writers. Eber's hymns, seven in all, are of the same purport and spirit as Luther's. The content of Eber's chorales is like that of most of the Reformation Period; it is the result of a Christian confession of faith as it is presented in the Bible.⁶¹ This chorale was based on a reworking of a Latin hymn by Joachim Camerarius, "Intenebris nostrae." Eber's treatment of the text and of the resultant chorale as we have it was a product of a period of needs and dangers. It has become to the people of the evangelical faith a prayer of comfort.

We hear here the psalm of a soul, which in the midst of its anguish and oppression knows that his faith is his fortress which has overcome the world.⁶²

We quote stanzas one through four and six; they direct the soul to the real malady and to the only salvation and the only Savior.

⁶⁰ Schultz, op. cit., p. 59.

⁶¹ Sperber, op. cit., p. 132.

⁶² Ibid.

Wenn wir in hoechsten Noeten sein
 und wissen nicht, wo aus noch ein,
 und finden weder Hilf' noch Rat,
 ob wir gleich sorgen frueh und spat:

So ist dies unser Trost allein,
 dasz wir zusammen insgemein
 dich rufen an, o treuer Gott,
 um Rettung aus der Angst und Not.

Und heben unsre Aug'n und Herz
 zu dir in wahrer Reu' und Schmerz
 und suchen der Suend' Vergebung
 und aller Strafen Linderung,

Die du verheiszest gnaedig lich allen,
 die darum bitten dich
 im Namen dein's Sohns Jesu Christ,
 der unser Heil und Fuersprech ist.

Sieh nicht an unsre Suende grosz,
 sprich uns derselb'n aus Gnaden los,
 steh uns in unserm Elend bei,
 mach' uns von allen Plagen frei,⁶³

In the time of need and danger the eyes should be directed to the soul's highest needs, needs which have been brought on by sin and transgression. Each soul, then, should lift up its eyes unto heaven from whence comes forth all help.⁶⁴

In faith and in the name of Jesus Christ, the sinner has experienced God's help in the forgiveness of all his sin, he calls God gracious. The chorale emphasizes throughout that all mankind must approach God through Christ, who alone is our Savior and Advocate. He is the Savior because He, and He alone, gained for all forgiveness of sin, and blessedness. He is the Advocate inasmuch as He, and He alone,

⁶³Kirchengesangbuch, p. 285.

⁶⁴Schulze, op. cit., pp. 191 f.

goes before the Father and pleads for mankind before the throne of grace, that man might embrace forgiveness.⁶⁵ It is such a soul that can sing with boldness the requests of the six stanza, here translated freely:

Look not upon the greatness of our sin,
But by grace declare them all forgives.
stand by us in our sore distress
and from all misery make us free,

In summing up the soteriological content of this chorale the following points are to be noted: The poet realized that the greatest need of all is the need for forgiveness. He also knows that it is only through Jesus Christ that this forgiveness may be obtained, for Christ is our Savior, and our Advocate before the throne of grace. He thus prays that out of grace, and for the sake of Jesus Christ all sins of mankind be forgiven. He prays for reconciliation, that all mankind through Christ might call God "Father."

f. In Christi Wunden schlaf' ich ein 724585

In Christi Wunden schlaf' ich ein,
die machen mich von Suenden rein;
ja, Christi Blut und G'rechtigkeit,
das ist mein Schmuck und Ehrenkleid,
damit will ich vor Gott bestehn,
wenn ich zum Himmel werd' eingehn.

Mit Fried' und Frued'ich fahr' dahin,
ein Gotteskind ich allzeit bin.
Dank hab', mein Tod, du fuehrest mich;
ins ew'ge Leben wandre ich,
mit Christi Blut gereinigt sein.
Herr Jesu, staerk' den Glauben mein!⁶⁶

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Kirchengesangbuch, p. 303.

This hymn by Paul Eber was classed, by the Reformation Church, among the death and burial chorales. In it the poet describes the hope a child of God has in the hour of death. The hope and confidence of the Christian in the hour of death is not in his own good works, or in his pure life; on the contrary, he depends upon the stoning death of Jesus Christ. The Christian does this because he knows that the wounds of Christ, Christ's suffering death, made him clean from sin. From those wounds flowed the blood of Christ, the blood of "life," through which the sinner is forgiven, justified and redeemed.⁶⁷ This is the soteriological content of the chorale. Through the shed blood of Christ we have forgiveness and life both here and in eternity.

g. Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt

This chorale by Lazarus Sprengler is a treatment of the words of St. Paul, Romans 5. 18 ff. It sings of the truth that, what Adam spoiled Christ restored.⁶⁸ Cyriacus Spangenberg said concerning this chorale:

. . . Es lehret dieses geistliche Lied von dem Hauptartikel, daran unsere Seligkeit gelegen, oder worinnen unsere Gerechtigkeit vor Gott stehe, ganz schoen, richtig und umstaendlich, . . .⁶⁹

One sees that the Holy Ghost was the master in this hymn, so beautifully, real, and pleasingly are the words in

⁶⁷Schultz, op. cit., p. 137.

⁶⁸Sperber, op. cit., p. 137.

⁶⁹Schultz, op. cit., p. 79.

it composed. Along with its wretched lament over sin and its damage is the blessed and hearty proclamation of Grace. This grace is linked up with the atonement through Christ.⁷⁰

This hymn is one of the earliest of the Reformation Period. It puts forth the fundamental tenets of the Reformation. It was held in high esteem and almost attained Symbolic standing. Part of the chorale is quoted in the Formula of Concord, in the article dealing with original sin.⁷¹ This chorale appeared in the "Wittenberger Gesangbuch" of 1524, under the heading, "Ein geistliches Lied, von Fall und Erloesung des menschlichen Geschlechts."⁷²

The chorale embraces the following three main thoughts:

1. the total corruption (Verderbtheit), of human nature;
2. the restoration (Wiedererstattung), through Christ of that which was lost in the fall; 3. the Atonement through Christ.⁷³ To be noted is the fact that almost every stanza of the chorale refers to "sin and Grace." However, the chorale centers around the third stanza which reads:

Wie uns nun hat ein' fremde Schuld
in Adam all' verhoehnet,
also hat uns ein' fremde Huld
in Christo all' versoehnet;
und wie wir all' durch Adams Fall
sind ew'gen Tods gestorben,
also hat Gott durch Christus' Tod
verneut, das was verdorben.⁷⁴

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹"Formula of Concord," Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1921), p. 781.

⁷²Kirchenlieder-Lexicon, I, 144.

⁷³Schults, op. cit., p. 80.

⁷⁴Kirchengesangbuch, pp. 165 f.

We take cognizance of the soteriological element expressed in other stanzas of the chorale. In stanza one:

Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt
menschlich' Nau

.....

Stanza two:

.....
so war je not, dasz uns auch Gott sollt'
geben sein'n lieben Sohn,
der Gnaden Thron,
in dem wir moechten leben.

Stanza four:

So er uns denn sein'n Sohn hat g'schenkt
da wir sein' Feind' noch waren,
der fuer uns ist ans Kreuz gehaengt,
getoet't gen Himmel g'fahren,
dadurch wir sein von Tod und Pein
erloest,

.....

And in stanza five:

Er ist der Weg, das Licht,
die Pfort', die Wahrheit und das Leben,
des Vaters Rat und ewiges Wort,
den er uns hat gegeben zu einem Schutz,
das wir mit Trutz an ihn fest
sollen glauben, darum uns bald
kein' Macht noch G'walt
aus seiner Hand wird rauben.

In stanza eight the poet gives the foundation and certainty of the hope of salvation:

Ich bitt', o Herr, aus Herzengrund,
du woll'st nicht von mir nehmen
dein heilli'ges Wort aus meinem Mund,
so wird mich nicht beschaemen mein'
Suend' und Schuld, denn in dein' Huld
setz' ich all mein Vertrauen;
wer sich man fest darauf verlaeszt,
der wird den Tod nicht schauen.

It is apparent from these stanzas of the chorale that this is one of the chorales written during this period which includes and embraces in its text the three "solas" of the Reformation Manifesto. It is by grace alone, through faith alone, upon the promises of Scripture alone that the hope of salvation lies, and this is the only way whereby man can be saved.

Because of man's lost condition, God sent into the world His only Son, as a gift to mankind. His Son Jesus Christ was crucified, He died, and also ascended into heaven, thereby redeeming mankind from death and punishment. This redemptive work is only for those who by faith accept it, to those who place their trust and confidence in Christ. And to these is given the added promise that nothing shall separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. The man of God has this confidence because his hope and confidence rest upon the sure promises of God as revealed in His holy Word, the Bible, which Bible is a glorious boon for the poet, as we find it expressed in the final stanza of the chorale:

Mein'n Fueszen ist dein heilig Wort
 ein' brennende Luzerne, ein Licht,
 das mir den Weg weist fort.
 So dieser Morgensterne in uns aufgeht,
 so bald versteht der Mensch die hohen Gaben,
 die Gottes Geist den'n g'wisz verheiszt,
 die Hoffnung darein haben.

h. O Mensch beweine dein Suende gross

Sebald Heyden is generally credited with having written

this chorale about 1525. In twenty-three stanzas, based upon the accounts of the four Gospels, the poet puts into singable verse the passion history of Jesus Christ. It is a passion harmony put to verse. Paul Gerhardt later reworked this chorale in twenty-nine stanzas. But however good the hymn might be, its great length to this day hinders its circulation.⁷⁵

In the first stanza the poet states briefly the reason for the events which transpire in the subsequent stanzas of the hymn. He fills this first stanza with soteriological content. This may be seen in the quote to follow. In the twenty-second stanza Heyden summarizes the benefits which we derive from the events which he had described in previous verses; he states the benefits which we receive because of the passion of Jesus Christ. These two stanzas, the first and twenty-second, are here quoted in addition to a portion of the last stanza:

O Mensch beweyn deyn Suende gross,
darumb Christus seyne Vatters schosz
sussert und kam auff erden;
Von einer Junckfraw reyn und zart
fuer uns er hie geparen ward,
er wolt der mitler werden.

Den todten er das leben gab
und legt darbey all krankheyt ab,
bisz sich die zeyt her trange,
dz er fuer uns geopffert wurd,
trueg unser Suenden schwere buerd
wol an dem Creutze lange.

Die Juden fuerthen noch noch ein klag,
verhuetten grab, an dritten tag
Jhesus stund auff mit gwalte,
Auff das er uns ja frumme mecht
und mit jm in sein reyche brecht
ausz der suendtlichen gstatte.

⁷⁵Kirchenlieder-Lexicon, II, 193.

Darumb wir sollen froehlich sein,
 das unser seligmacher feyn,
 Christus, hat überwunden
 Fuer uns der suenden grosse not,
 darzu die hellen und den todt
 und auch den Teuffel bunden.

.....
 Die lieb erzeygen Yederman
 die Christus hat an uns gethan
 mit seynem leiden, sterben.⁷⁶

It was the sin of mankind that brought Christ from heaven, to be born of a virgin, He was to be the Mediator between God and man. Therefore, He offered Himself upon the tree of the cross and bore upon Himself the burden of man's sin. Because of Christ's sacrifice, man should be joyous, for in this death Christ won victory over death, sin and the devil. He made man blessed. In short, He gained for all mankind salvation.

i. Es ist das Heil uns kommen her +LH377

This chorale by Paul Speratus is a hymn in which the whole period of the Reformation is reflected. "Ein recht evangelisches Lied vom Unterschied des Gesetzes und Evangelii, der gnaedigen Rechtfertigung durch den Glauben und dessen Fruechten."⁷⁷ The hymn springs from the early Reformation era. It preaches the basic thought of the Reformation, the faith which makes one blessed through Jesus Christ.⁷⁸

⁷⁶Philipp Wackernagel, Das deutsche Kirchenlied (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1870), III, 553 f.

⁷⁷Wangemann, op. cit., p. 167.

⁷⁸Sperber, op. cit., p. 142.

"Es ist das Heil" might be called a condensation of the Gospel. In word and song it embraces Christ Himself. The chorale proclaims the heart of the biblical doctrine of salvation. It proclaims the heart of evangelical confession in direct contradistinction to the papal tenet of justification by works.⁷⁹ What Luther says in his foreward to the Epistle to the Romans has been said to be applicable to this chorale also:

Es ist das rechte Hauptstueck des Neuen Testaments und das allerlauterste Evangelium, welches wohl wuerdig und werth ist, dasz es ein Christemensch nicht allein von Wort zu Wort auswendig wisse, sondern taeglich damit umgehe, als mit dem taeglichen Brod der Seelen. Denn es nimmer kann zu viel oder zu wohl gelesen oder betrachtet werden; und je mehr es gehandelt wird, je koestlicher wbrd's und desto besser schmecht's.⁸⁰

This chorale has been called the "Marseillaise" of Protestantism.⁸¹ Schultz says that though Luther's works embrace many volumes, all are nothing more than an exposition of the words of "Es ist das Heil uns kommen her."⁸²

In reading the text it is apparent that the poet had St. Paul's Letter to the Romans before his eyes. Speratus treats the foremost article of the evangelical faith and doctrine, namely that a man is justified before God solely by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. Schulze states the theme of the chorale in the following words: "Die Recht-

⁷⁹Schultz, op. cit., p. 95.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 96.

⁸¹Spitta, op. cit., p. 3.

⁸²Schultz, op. cit., p. 96.

fertigung des Suenders vor Gott nicht durch des Gesetzes Werke, sondern allein durch den Glauben.⁸³

Already in stanza one does the poet set forth the theme of the hymn. Justification comes solely through God's grace and goodness. What man was unable to do Christ did for Him. He conquered death and became the Mediator and Reconciler between God and man.⁸⁴ Throughout the chorale the way of salvation is treated both negatively and positively. In several stanzas the poet negates the possibility of salvation by works and positively presents the way of salvation through Christ Jesus. We note this interplay in the stanzas quoted. This interplay demonstrates the soteriological element of the chorale. Stanza one reads:

Es ist das Heil uns kommen her
von Gnad' und lauter Guete,
die Werke helfen nimmermehr,
sie moegen nicht behueten;
der Glaub' sieht Jesum Christum an,
der hat g'nug fuer uns all' getan,
er is der Mittler worden.⁸⁵

Stanza three:

Es war ein falscher Wahn dabei,
Gott haett' sein G'setz drum geben,
als ob wir moechten selber frei
nach seinem Willen leben;
so ist es nur ein Spiegel zart,
der uns zeigt an die suende'ge Art,
in unserm Fleisch verborgen.

The process of fulfilling the law and of stilling God's wrath was begun with the sending of God's Son into the world.

⁸³Schulze, op. cit., p. 75.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Kirchengesangbuch, pp. 166 f.

Christ took upon Him human nature and as man made an end to the law by fulfilling it. This entailed not only the fulfillment of the demands of the Law, but also the Law's curse which came with sin. God made flesh, the God-man Christ Jesus through His suffering and death accomplished this. Thus the godly are justified and God's grace abounds. This is the content of stanza five.⁸⁶

Doch muetz' das G'setz erfuellet sein,
sonst waer'n wir all' verdorben;
darum schickt' Gott sein'n Sohn herein,
der selber Mensch ist worden;
daz ganz gesetz hat er erfuehlt,
damit sein's Vaters Zorn gestillt,
dor uebertuns ging alle.

The content of a Christian's faith should embrace everything which was accomplished for him by Jesus Christ. The Christian places his confidence on Christ's merit and redemption. Salvation and justification are by faith and must stand on no other ground.⁸⁷ This is what stanza six emphasizes when it says:

Und wenn es nun erfuellet ist
durch den, der es konnt' halten,
so lerne jetzt ein frommer Christ
des Glaubens recht' Gestalte.
Nicht mehr, denn: Lieber Herre mein,
dein Tod wird mir das Leben sein,
du hast fuer mich bezahlet!

We find the soteriological content in the following stanzas or portions thereof, noting such words as, grace (Gnade), faith (Glaube), etc.

⁸⁶Schulze, op. cit., pp. 76 f.

⁸⁷Ibid.

Stanza seven:

.....
 Wer glaubt an mich und wird getauft,
 demselben ist der Himm'l erkauf't,
 dasz er nicht wird verloren.

Stanza eight:

Er is gerecht vor Gott allein,
 der diesen Glauben fasset;
 der Glaub' gibt aus von sich den Schein,
 so er die Werk' nicht laasset;
 mit Gott der Glaub' ist wohl daran,

Stanza ten:

.....
 Doch macht allein der Glaub' gerecht,
 die Werke sind des Naechsten Knecht,
 dabei wir'n Glauben merken.

The poet emphasizes that it is the word of God which assures the child of God of the certainty of his salvation.

This may be seen in the twelfth stanza of the hymn:

Ob sich's anliesz', als wollt' er nicht,
 lasz dich es nicht erschrecken;
 denn wo er ist am besten mit,
 da will er's nicht entdecken.
 Sein Wort lasz dir gewisser sein;
 und ob dein Fleisch spraech' lauter Nein,
 so lasz doch dir nicht grauen.

We see in this chorale the three solas of the Reforma-
 tion era. The content of the hymn might well be identified
 with the Apostolic phraseology of St. Paul when he says,
 by grace are ye saved, through faith, it is a gift of God,
 not of works lest ~~any~~ man should boast.⁸⁸

With the spread of Pietism the star of this hymn of

⁸⁸ Eph. 2:8-9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

justification began to eclipse.⁸⁹ To modern Protestantism it is now considered a rhymed dogmatics. Spitta says that this was part of the reaction of religious individualism (subjectiveness), against the objective "Bekenntnislied" of classical evangelical hymnody.⁹⁰

j. O Lamm Gottes unschuldig

JH 146

This chorale by Nicolaus Decius, written about 1522, is a reworking of the ancient Latin hymn "Agnus Dei." Originally a Good Friday hymn sung in threefold repetition, it was taken over by the Lutheran Church and adapted for use in the Communion service. The content of the hymn has been summed up thus:

Lob und Preis des Gotteslammes, das unsere
Suenden getragen hat, mit der Bitte um sein
Erbarmen und seinen Frieden.⁹¹

Addressing Jesus as the Lamb of God has its roots in the Old Testament. Through His blood Jesus delivered mankind from eternal death, even as the Blood of the Passover Lamb delivered the Jews from the Angel of death in the Land of Egypt. This lamb however, is God's Lamb, because God Himself sent Him. It is blameless, as Jesus was without sin and guilt. Therefore, this Lamb, Christ, alone was fit to bear the guilt of mankind and redeem all from sin, death,

⁸⁹Kirchenlieder-Lexicon, I, 180.

⁹⁰Spitta, op. cit., p. 3.

⁹¹Schulze, op. cit., p. 32.

and the power of the devil.⁹²

The text of this chorale is the same in all three stanzas, except for the last line of the last stanza.

O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig
am Stamm des Kreuzes geschlachtet,
allzeit funden geduldig,
wiewohl du warest verachtet;
all' Suend' hast du getragen,
sonst mueszten wir verzagen,
Erbarm' dich unser, O Jesu!⁹³

The last line of the last stanza reads:

Gib uns dein'n Frieden, O Jesu!

The soteriological element of this chorale is best described and defined by Durandus when he says:

Bei der dreimaligen Wiederholung sollen wir bedanken, wie der Herr Jesus 1) unsere Suenden weggetragen, 2) die strafe selber getragen und 3) in der Predigt des Evangelii und im hochheiligen Abendmahl sein Verdienst uns ins Herz getragen habe.⁹⁴

The petition for peace found in the third stanza is a plea for spiritual peace which can be gained only through the Lamb of God. It is the peace of God, the inner peace (Seelenruhe) of the soul, which has embraced the grace of God through faith in Christ.⁹⁵ Commenting on this "peace,"

Schamelius says:

Mein Herz! hast du in den 3 Versen nach einander den gekreuzigten Jesum andaechtlich betrachtet, so wirst du unfehlbar befriedigt und beruhigt werden, wenn der die Andacht mit diesen Worten zuletzt schlieszest.⁹⁶

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Kirchengesangbuch, p. 57.

⁹⁴Schulze, Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 33.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 32.

Ringwaldt based this chorale on a Latin hymn by Thomas of Celano, "Dies Irae, dies illa." The concluding stanza of the poet is a plaintive cry, "O Jesu Christ, du machst es lang mit deinem juengsten Tage," At the time it was written, the poet thought that the Judgement Day would come in the year 1684.⁹⁷ Ringwaldt thinks of Judgement Day not as something remote and distant, but rather as being imminent and near at hand. He speaks and interprets the Day not as a day of doom and fear, but rather in the light of the entire redemptive process of God. The second coming of Christ is for Ringwaldt the culmination of God's redeeming work in Christ Jesus.⁹⁸

The poet bases his hope in Christ Jesus. He expresses the basis for his hope and confidence when the final day comes in the fifth stanza of the chorale. In the fore part of the sixth he pleads that Christ would be his Advocate when He comes to judge the quick and the dead. Stanza five and part of six read:

O Jesu, hilf zur selben Zeit
 von wegen deiner Wunden,
 dasz ich im Buch der Seligkeit
 werd' angezeichnet funden!
 Daran ich denn auch zweifle nicht,
 denn du hast ja den Feind gericht't
 und meine Schuld bezahlet.

⁹⁷ Sperber, op. cit., p. 165.

⁹⁸ Schultz, op. cit., p. 153.

Derhalben mein Fuersprecher sei,
wenn du nun wirst erscheinen.⁹⁹

The Period of the Thirty-Years War and
the Post War Period

For the poet the era of the Thirty-Years War and of the Post War Period is one of contradiction. It is not only a period of deterioration, but also one of regeneration.¹⁰⁰ It was a period of deterioration because of the ever increasing move toward pietism. It was a period of regeneration because it brought a new blossoming period of the chorale, a period which Sperber sums up in the following words:

Es ist eine durch eine reichere Bildung und Individualitaet veredelte Kraft des objektives Zeugnisses von den Wahrheiten des Heils.

This period is a transition period. It marks a transition from the strongly outspoken "Bekenntnislied" of the earlier period to a greater stressing of the subjective element. The new element was put in the form of hymn which is termed a "Zeugnislied." This type of hymn expressed the content of faith in terms of life experiences.¹⁰¹

Perhaps as in no period before or after did the German people become more fully aware of the treasure it had in the Bible, in the Gospel, and in the Lutheran Church.¹⁰² It

⁹⁹Kirchengesangbuch, pp. 320 f.

¹⁰⁰Nelle, op. cit., p. 83.

¹⁰¹Sperber, op. cit., p. 181.

¹⁰²Nelle, Ibid.

was the expression of these treasures in terms of life experiences which greatly augmented the heritage of evangelical hymnody. Further these hymns, to a marked degree followed in the footsteps and spirit of Luther, the founder of the evangelical chorale.¹⁰³

For all intents and purposes this period is opened by Johann Heermann, even though he composed chorales before Opitz¹⁰⁴ had instituted the new rules of composition. The collection of his chorales did not appear until 1630.¹⁰⁵ However it must be noted that this tendency toward the subjective element could be detected already in 1397. With the composing of the chorale "Wie Schoen Leuchtet der Morgenstern," Philipp Nicolai opened the area of the "Jesu-
lieder." The introduction of this type of chorale started the gradual transition, which gathered momentum in the seventeenth century, from the objective "Bekenntnislied" of the Reformation Period to the "Zeugnislied" of this later period.¹⁰⁶

It is likely that the dominating force, which determined the characteristic of the chorales of this period, was the suffering endured by the people and by the hymn writers of the day. The era from Heermann to Gerhardt is a period of immense physical suffering. If what Nelle says is true

¹⁰³Rehnert, op. cit., p. 21.

¹⁰⁴Supra: p. 27.

¹⁰⁵Nelle, op. cit., p. 89.

¹⁰⁶Sperber, op. cit., p. 180.

concerning Heermann's chorales, namely that: "His life are his chorales," is it any wonder then that in the chorales of Heermann, whose life was a chain of suffering, one detects a note of the subjective, particularly in his many "Passions-, Buss-, Trost- und Trainenliedern?"¹⁰⁷ What is true of Heermann is equally true of Gerhardt and of all those men between, who grew up in that era of extreme hardship. His homeland was destroyed completely by fire and war. The plague took lives which the war had failed to take; famine too many more of those who remained. However, a redeeming feature of it all seems to have been:

Aber wer weisz ob nicht dieses Gehen durch die
Finsternis ihn zu dem lichten Morgen hat fuehren
muessen, aus dem herrlich und leuchtend sein
Dichten wie ein funkelnder Bronnen entsprungen ist?¹⁰⁸

This period produced some fine hymns in which the objective truths of salvation show through. It produced Paul Gerhardt who, next to Luther, is perhaps the greatest hymn-writer of Germany.¹⁰⁹

Gerhardt wrote his hymns with a firm grasp of the objective realities of the Christian faith. Furthermore, he was loyal to the doctrinal standards of the Lutheran Church. Nevertheless, Gerhardt was human; he took in his hymns, a fresh view of both nature and mankind. Thus we find the subjective tone in his chorales, sixteen of which begin with

¹⁰⁷Nelle, op. cit., p. 90.

¹⁰⁸Hesselbacher, op. cit., p. 21.

¹⁰⁹Rohnert, op. cit., pp. 23 f.

"I". Still Gerhardt did not speak so much as an individual; as he spoke rather as a representative member of the Church.¹¹⁰ And if in this period it is more and more evident that the subjective element in the hymnody is more and more prominent, still in the hymnody of the era there is still a strong evangelical consciousness of the preceding period.¹¹¹

Gerhardt rejoiced ever in the love of God the Father. He stood upon the shoulders of Luther and simply sang what Luther had sung, the nugget of gold, the kernel of the Scriptures, the Gospel which Luther had spread.¹¹² Gerhardt stood upon the old basis of church confessions even though his chorales took on subjective characteristics.¹¹³ In his later period Gerhardt wrote hymns which bordered on the pietistic; yet were they without the sentimentalism and enthusiasm which characterized the hymn of the Pietistic Period.¹¹⁴ Examples of soteriological hymnody by Gerhardt are treated later.¹¹⁵

a. Wenn dein Herzliebster Sohn

Since the time of Luther and his own day, no hymnwriter gained the stature that Johann Heermann attained to.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰A Dictionary of Hymnology, p. 410.

¹¹¹Sperber, op. cit., pp. 211 f.

¹¹²Hesselbacher, op. cit., p. 170.

¹¹³Rohnert, op. cit., pp. 89 f.

¹¹⁴Hesselbacher, op. cit., p. 132.

¹¹⁵Infra, p. 79.

¹¹⁶Nelle, op. cit., p. 89.

Next to Luther and Gerhardt he is the best known and most famous hymn writer the Lutheran church has produced.¹¹⁷

Next to Gerhardt, he is the best known writer of the seventeenth century. Although he comes from this century, his hymns have a goodly portion of the objective element, and they are numbered, Schulze says, among the gems in the treasury of evangelical hymnody.¹¹⁸

Among the many hymns composed by Heermann, we find the Chorale under consideration in this section, namely, "Wenn dein Herzliebster Sohn." It is a Chorale which treats justification in five stanzas. In some hymnals six stanzas are found, the sixth being added later by an anonymous author. The chorale sings a joyful trust upon Christ's complete merit. Although each stanza of this chorale vividly portrays the way of salvation and the redeeming message of Christ, the fifth stanza has been considered the key stanza of the stanza of the chorale. Significant also is the fact that it was this fifth stanza that truly impressed itself upon the memory of the people.¹¹⁹ In a sense the fifth stanza is a recapitulation of all that has gone before. It gathers up the kernels of thought expressed in the other stanzas and in the final stanza puts forth in one unit the complete way of salvation. It is a summary of the soteriological element.

¹¹⁷Rohnert, op. cit., p. 99.

¹¹⁸Schulze, op. cit., p. 28.

¹¹⁹Kirchenlieder-Lexicon, II, 347.

that had been expressed in the previous four. We quote here all five stanzas:

Wenn dein herzlichster Sohn, o Gott,
nicht waer' auf Erden kommen
und haett', da ich in Suenden tot,
mein Fleisch nicht angenommen,
so mueszt' ich arnes Wuernelein
zur Hoelle wandern in die Pein
un meiner Untat willen.

Jetzt aber had' ich Ruh' und Rast,
darf nimmermehr verzagen,
weil er dei schwere Suendenlast
fuer mich hat selbst getragen.
Er hat mit dir versoehnet mich,
da er am Kreuz liez toeten sich,
auf dass ich selig wuerde.

Drum ist getrost mein Herz und Mut
mit kindlichem Vertrauen.
Auf dies sein rosenfarbnes Blut
will ich mein' Hoffnung bauen,
dass er fuer mich vergossen hat,
gewaschen ab die Missetat,
dass ich schneeweisz bin worden.

In seinem Blut erquick' ich mich
und komm' zu dir mit Freuden;
ich suche Gnad' demuetiglich,
von dir soll mich nichts scheiden.
Was mir erworben hat dein Sohn
durch seinen Tod und Marterkron',
dann mir dein Teufel rauben.

Nichto hilft mir die Gerechtigkeit,
die von Gesetz herruehret;
wer sich in eignem Werk erfreut,
wird jaemmerlich verfuehret.
Des Herren Jesu Werk allein,
das macht's dass ich kann selig sein,
weil ich fest an ihn glaube.¹²⁰

We take note of the following soteriological elements expressed in this chorale. We note first that if Christ, God's Son, had not come into the world to save us from our

¹²⁰Kirchengesangbuch, p. 175.

load of sin, mankind, like a "worm," would wend its way to Hell; second, the forgiveness craved for and received, the accompanying peace and hope upon which mankind can now build life, were obtained for man upon the cross. Through the shed blood of Christ, the blood, as the poet describes it, that "quickens," man is enabled to come to God in joy. We note finally that the blessings obtained through grace, purchased and won by Christ's death and "martyrdom," give us a salvation which no "devil" can take away from us. For, the poet sums up, our hope is not in anything of ourselves, but solely in the work of Jesus Christ. This work makes us blessed.

b. Ach wie gross is deine Gnade 384

The chorales of Johannes Olearius, the composer of the chorale under consideration, are characterized by their brevity. Many are of only two stanzas. His hymns are simple and easy of comprehension, often happy in expression. Olearius had the ability of catching and embracing, in a concise form, the leading ideas of the season or subject under his attention. Because of these qualities many of his chorales were speedily adopted and a considerable number of them are still in popular use.¹²¹ Olearius stands upon the threshold of the "subjective" era, in his chorales there

¹²¹ A Dictionary of Hymnology, p. 866.

still ring the tones of the Reformation Period.¹²²

"Ach wie gross ist deine Gnade" is a hymn of thanks and praise written especially for the Second Sunday of the Trinity season.¹²³ Praise and thanks are expressed to extol the infinite grace of God. He extolled also the manner in which God displayed His tender regard for mankind by sending His only Son into the world for the salvation of man. The poet weakens the soteriological element, however, in that he leaves the identity of the "Son" unspecified. He evidently took for granted that the worshippers would know that Christ is meant. We quote here the first, second and fourth stanzas:

Ach wie gross ist deine Gnade,
du getreues Vaterherz,
dass dich unsre Not und Schmerz,
dass dich aller Menschen Schade
hat erbarmet vaeterlich,
uns zu helfen ewiglich!

Du hast uns so hoch geliebet,
dass der Mensch soll aller Pein
frei und ewig selig sein,
dass dein Sohn sich selbst hingibet
und beruft uns allzumal
zu dem grossen Abendmahl.

Weil die Wahrheit nicht kann luegen,
will ich dir vertrauen fest,
weil du keinen nicht verlaeszt;
weil dein Wort nicht kann betruengen,
bleibt mir meine Seligkeit
unverrueckt in Ewigkeit.¹²⁴

Salvation is initiated by God out of Mercy and love to-

¹²²Rohnert, op. cit., pp. 160 f.

¹²³Kirchenlieder-Lexicon, I, 28.

¹²⁴Kirchengesangbuch, p. 232.

ward mankind. The sending of His Son into the world to effect this salvation is a gift of His grace and a result of His mercy. Mankind is assured of this salvation by the "Truth" upon which he must base his blessedness. Man finds this "Truth" in the Word of God. We note here the emphasis of the sola gratia and the sola scriptura, both of which are characteristic of the Reformation Period and its chorales.

c. Ich bin bei Gott in Gnaden

76H 372

This hymn in six stanzas is based on Romans 8: 31 f. It concerns itself with the doctrine of justification.¹²⁵ Simon Dach, the author is placed among the best hymn writers of his time. His chorales won him the distinction of being one of the most lovable, profound, and elegant of the more contemplative composers. Their personal and subjective qualities, and the fact that so many deal with preparation for death, prevented all but a few of Dach's chorales from finding a place in modern hymnals.¹²⁶

"Ich bin bei Gott in Gnaden" is a restatement of Paul's classic statement on preservation in the faith. The poet sets the keynote in the first stanza and summarizes his confidence in the fifth and final stanza. We quote here the first and fifth stanzas of the hymn; these express the basis of the poet's assurance and are the soteriological

¹²⁵Kirchenlieder-Lexicon, I, 318.

¹²⁶A Dictionary of Hymnology, p. 277.

element of the chorale at the same time:

Ich bin bei Gott in Gnaden
 durch Christi Blut und Tod.
 Was kann mir endlich schaden?
 Was acht' ich alle Not?
 Ist er auf meiner Seiten,
 gleichwie er wharlich ist,
 lass immer mich bestreiten
 auch alle Hoellenlist.

Noch sonst, was je erschaffen,
 von Gottes Liebe mich
 soll scheiden oder raffien;
 denn diese gruendet sich
 auf Christi Tod und Sterben.
 Ihn fleh' ich glaeubig an,
 nicht lassen will noch kann.¹²⁷

The child of God stands before God, and lives with Him,
 through grace and the merits of Christ's blood and death.
 This forms the basis of the poets boast because he stands
 in this relationship with God, not only can nothing separate
 him from the love of God in Christ, but God will not, yes
 cannot leave him:

• • • • •
 Ihn fleh' ich glaeubig an,
 der mich, sein Kind und Erben,
 nicht lassen will noch kann.

d. Aus Gnaden soll ich selig werden

This chorale is based upon Ephesians 2. 8-9.¹²⁸ It
 treats the subject of justification. It is by Christian
 Scheidt and has ten stanzas.¹²⁹ A significant feature of

¹²⁷ Kirchengesangbuch, pp. 168 f.

¹²⁸ Supra: p. 63.

¹²⁹ Kirchenlieder-Lexicon, I, 57.

this chorale is that each stanza begins with the phrase, "By Grace." These words form the opening phrase of the text upon which this chorale is based, "By grace are ye saved . . ." The chorale is a commentary on these words of Paul. To aid him in developing the variations on the theme, Scheidt periodically employs rhetorical questions, the first one of which forms the opening words of the chorale; as such, it serves as the question which the poet endeavors to answer throughout the development of the theme, "By Grace." Although the poet poses the question, from the outset one is never in doubt as to what the ultimate answer will be. We quote here the first, third, fifth, ninth and tenth stanzas of the hymn:

Aus Gnaden soll ich selig werden!
 Herz, glaubst du's oder glaubst du's nicht?
 Was willst du dich so bloed' gebaerden?
 Ist's Wahrheit, was die Schrift verspricht,
 so muss auch dieses Wahrheit sein:
 Aus Gaden ist der Himmel dein.

Aus Gnaden!--Merk' dies Wort:
 Aus Gnaden, so oft dich deine Suende plagt.
 sooft dir will der Satan schaden,
 sooft dich dein Gewissen nagt.
 Was die Vernunft nicht fassen kann,
 dasz beut dir Gott aus Gnaden an.

Aus Gnaden!--Dieser Grund wird bleiben,
 solange Gott wahrhaftig heiszt.
 Was alle Knechte Jesu schreiben,
 was Gott in seinem Wort anpreist,
 worauf all unser Glaube ruht,
 ist Gnade durch des Lammes Blut.

Aus Gnaden!--Hierauf will ich sterben.
 Ich fuehle nichts, doch mir ist wohl;
 ich kenn' mein suendliches Verderben,
 doch auch den, der mich heilen soll.
 Mein Geist ist froh, die Seele lacht,
 weil mich die Gnade selig macht.

Aus Gnaden! -- Dies hoer' Suend' und Teufel!
 Ich schwinge meine Glaubensfahn'
 und geh' getrost trots allem Zweifel
 durchs Rote Meer nach Kanaan.
 Ich glaub'm was Jesu Wort verspricht,
 ich fuehl' es oder fuehl' es nicht.¹³⁰

The soteriological element of this hymn has been expressed best by St. Paul. Nothing new can be added. However it is well to take note, that although this chorale dates from the period in which subjectivity became increasingly prominent, it has no room for the "experiential" testimony so prominent in later development. The last stanza emphasizes that it is upon the Word of God that the child of God's assurance rests, not on whether or not the soul has "felt" or "experienced" some subjective awakening.

• • • • •
 Ich glaub' was Jesu Wort verspricht,
 ich fuehl' es oder fuehl' es nicht.

e. Herr Jesu Christ, mein Trost und Licht

This chorale, written by Johann Rist, is a death and burial hymn of sixteen stanzas.¹³¹ Julian speaks highly of Rist's better hymns. They may be said to be noble and classical in style. Their objective Christian faith, their scripturalness, their power to console, to encourage, and to strengthen in trust upon God's fatherly love, likewise their expression of fervant love for the Savior, justify sufficiently the esteem in which Rist's chorales are held.¹³² The

¹³⁰ Kirchengesangbuch, pp. 163 f.

¹³¹ Kirchenlieder-Lexicon, I, 276.

¹³² A Dictionary of Hymnology, p. 965.

soteriological element of this chorale may be demonstrated in the following quoted stanzas, the first, third and seventh:

Herr Jesu Christ, mein trost und Licht,
ich danke dir von Herzen,
dass du mich hast verstoszen nicht,
als mich der Suenden Schmerzen
aus der Maszen hart durch Satan,
der, als Widerpart,
nicht laasset mit sich scherzen.

Du nie beflecktes Gotteslamm
bist ja fuer mich gestorben;
ach du, mein Seelenbraeutigam,
hast selber mir erworben durch
deinen Tod die Seligkeit;
dir dank' ich dasz ich, so befreit,
bleib' ewig unverdorben.

Herr Jesu, lass mich dich allein
stets suchen und bald finden;
lass mich der Welt entrissen sein,
so kann ich recht verbinden
mein Herz mit dir und alle Not,
Welt, Suende, Teufel, Hoell'
und Tod ganz sieghaft ueberwinden.¹³³

As was noted previously, this chorale deals with death and as such is a death and burial hymn. It is significant to note that the poet's hope lies in that he has been made blessed through the death of the Lamb of God. Through that death sin has been taken away and man has been given assurance that he will remain incorruptible through all eternity.

f. O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden

Even as the golden era of the chorale came in with a blaze of glory with the chorales of Luther, so the chorale

¹³³ Kirchengesangbuch, pp. 167 f.

ends its golden era with another blaze of glory, the chorales of Paul Gerhardt. Even as Luther dominated the hymnody of his period, so, too, did Gerhardt dominate and rise above the typical hymnody of his period. However, one principle is common to both. The cardinal principle of the Reformation that the just shall live by faith lived in the heart of Gerhardt even as it had lived in the heart of Luther.

Because of this, Gerhardt lived in the saving deeds of God and could deck the Church Year's festivals with hymns which, although very personal, yet is found within them the objective expression of the Church's confessions. "Christ is the core and star of all of Gerhardt's festival hymns -- more than that of all his poetry."¹³⁴

Gerhardt lived what he sang and his hymns were sung out of the Reformation edict "Justified by faith alone."¹³⁵ They sprang out of the fervent faith of the Church.¹³⁶ The theme of his chorales might well be expressed in these words: "Das is meine Freude, dasz ich mich zu Gott halte und meine Zuversicht setze auf den Herrn, dasz ich verkündige alle sein Tun."¹³⁷ Schulze says that in Gerhardt's chorales one sees a picture of his life and living:

Der ganz voll glaube, lieb' und Hoffnung war erfuehlt.
In Toenen voller Kraft, gleich Assaphs Harsenklagen,
erhob er Christi Lob in himmlischen Gesaengen. Sing

¹³⁴Nelle, op. cit., pp. 121 f. *see p 38*

¹³⁵Hesselbacher, op. cit., p. 85.

¹³⁶Schulze, op. cit., p. 7.

¹³⁷Hesselbacher, op. cit., p. 169.

seine Lieder oft, o Christ, in sel'ger Lust, so
dringet Gottes Geist durch sie in deine Brust.¹³⁸

One of the best known chorales of Paul Gerhardt is his
"O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden." Perhaps the best commentary
on this chorale, from the standpoint of soteriology, is
given by Bunsen as quoted in Schulze:

Der Glaebige stellt sich im Geist unter das Kreuz
des leidenden Erloesers, und es ergreift ihn bei diesem
niederdrueckendsten und erlebendsten Anblicke der
Weltbesichte das Gefuehl der Zweifachen persoen-
lichen Beziehung auf ihn; er erkennt und fuehlt auch
sich schuldig der menschlichen Suende, die den Herrn
ans Kreuz gebracht, aber auch theilhaftig der Gnade,
die von dem ewigen Opfer Christi fuer die ganze Welt
geflossen, er fuehlt, dasz unter dem Kreuz der rechts
Platz fuer die Christen ist, und bittet um die Gnade,
in der Betrachtung dieses Anblicks zu bleiben, vonson-
lich an seinem Ende, in der eignen Todesnoth.¹³⁹

Of the ten stanzas of this chorale we quote only the fourth,
seventh and tenth to demonstrate the soteriological element in
it.

Nun, was du, Herr, erduldet,
ist alles meine Last;
ich hab' es selbst verschuldet,
was du getragen hast.
Schau' her, hier steh' ich Armer,
der Zorn verdienet hat;
gib mir, o mein Erbarmer,
den Anblick deiner Gnad'!

Es dient zu meinen Freuden
und kommt mir herzlich wohl,
wenn ich in deinem Leiden,
mein Heil, mich finden soll.
Ach, moecht' ich, o mein Leben,
an deinem Kreuze hier
mein Leben von mir geben,
wie wohl geschaehe mir!

¹³⁸Schulze, Ibid.

¹³⁹Schulze, Ibid. p. 29.

Erscheine mir zum Schilde,
 zum Trost in meinem Tod,
 und lass mich sehn dein Bilde
 in deiner Kreuzesnot!
 Da will ich nach dir blicken,
 da will ich glaubensvoll
 dich fest an mein Herz druecken,
 Wer so stirbt, der stirbt wohl.¹⁴⁰

Schulze comments on stanza seven:

Er (der Christ), findet sich selbst, den fruher
 Verlorren, in dem Leiden Christi, seines Heils,
 durch welchen er also Heil empfangen hat, als
 den Erloesten und vor Gott Gerechtfertigten wieder.¹⁴¹

The poet recognizes that it was his sin which Christ bore on the cross and upon this knowledge he pleads for grace. In the hour of death the poet places his hope in Christ, in His suffering and death, and pleads that its meaning for him might be assured by faith and impressed upon his heart. He thus can say with confidence, "he who dies thus, dies will."

g. Wie soll ich dich Empfangen

"Wie soll ich dich empfangen" is an Advent chorale composed by Paul Gerhardt in ten stanzas. It embraces the main question of Advent, the inner question of the heart, how it should meet the Lord. It is a question addressed to the Savior who alone can quell the longing to be blessed and become Blessed.¹⁴²

The first stanza of the hymn emphasizes that Christ

¹⁴⁰Kirchengesangbuch, pp. 55 f.

¹⁴¹Schulze, op. cit., p. 31.

¹⁴²Schulze, op. cit., p. 4.

comes today even as He came the first time. Jesus who through the Grace of God and the forgiveness of our sins quickened us and brought true comfort, stands by our side according to His promise, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matt. 28; 20.¹⁴³

The first stanza of the chorale reads:

Wie soll ich dich empfangen,
und wie begeg'n' dir,
o aller Welt Verlangen,
o meiner Seele Zier?
O Jesu, Jesu, setze mir
selbst die Fackel bei,
damit, was dich ergoetze,
mir kund und wissend sei.¹⁴⁴

Stanza three expresses the Advent joy. The advent of Christ brings the advent of the kingdom of joy (Freudenreich). The Savior left nothing undone; on the contrary, He did all that needed to be done to bring to us comfort and peace. Christ came as the Redeemer to take away our sin, sin which had created a barrier between God and man. Christ came to take away our sin which had made us enemies of God rather than His heirs. Christ takes this sin away and puts in its place peace and joy. Mankind's reconciliation with God is wrought by Christ and the forgiveness He obtained for us.¹⁴⁵ This is the essence of stanza three, which reads:

Was hast du unterlassen
zu meinem Trost und Freud',
als Leib und Seele saszen
in ihrem groessten Leid?

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁴⁴Kirchengesangbuch, pp. 26 f.

¹⁴⁵ Schulze, Ibid., p. 5.

Als mir das Reich genommen,
da Fried' und Freude lacht,
da bist du, mein Heil, kommen
und hast mich froh gemacht.

We who stood in ridicule and disgrace, who had lost the image of God and had been steeped in shame because of the abyss of sin, to us Christ came and took upon Himself our scorn, lifted us to glory and again made us the children of God. He gave us the "greatest good." He opened heaven again, and restored us to eternal life.¹⁴⁶ This, says Schulze, is what Gerhardt sings in the fourth stanza of the hymn which reads:

Ich lag in schweren Banden,
du kommst und machst mich los;
ich stund in Spott und Schanden,
du kommst und machst mich gress
und hebst mich hoch zu Ehren
und schenkst mir groszes Gut,
das sich nicht laeszt verzehren,
wie irdisch Reichtum tut.

The tenth and final stanza pictures the second coming of Christ. Gerhardt portrays both sides of the picture. He pictures Christ as the judge and also as the Redeemer. Here is the eschatalogical fulfillment of God's complete redemptive process. By His grace, Christ takes His own and gives them their inheritance of eternal light and joy in His kingdom of joy. But, so the poet insists, unto those who reject the Christ, Christ comes to curse them. Christ condemns those who stand outside of grace and they face a eternal damnation. This is the essence of the tenth stanza, which

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

reads:

Er kommt zum Weltregrechte,
zum Fluch dem, der ihm flucht;
mit Gnad' und suezem Lichte
dem, der ihn liebt und sucht.
Ach komm, ach komm, o Sonne,
und hol' uns allzumal
zum ew'gen Licht und Wonne
in deinen Freudensaal!

h. O Welt, sieh hier dein Leben

Here is another one of Gerhardt's chorales. It is written in sixteen stanzas and the content of the chorale may be expressed in the words, "Die heilsame Betrachtung des Leidens Jesu Christi."¹⁴⁷

In the first stanza of the chorale the poet states that the dying Savior is the life of the world because we through Him have life and full satisfaction. He also calls Christ the Savior of the world because He has brought to us the grace of God and with it the forgiveness of sin, salvation and blessedness.¹⁴⁸ Stanza one reads:

O Welt, sieh hier dein Leben
am Stamm des Kreuzes schweben,
dein Heil sinkt in den Tod!
Der grosze Fuerst der Ehren
laeszt willig sich beschweren
mit Schlaegen, Hohn und groszem Spott.¹⁴⁹

Stanza three emphasises what the meaning of the suffering and death of Christ mean to the sinner. Christ suffered

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹Kirchengesangbuch, pp. 58 ff.

not because of sin of His own, but took upon Himself the sin and guilt of man.¹⁵⁰ The poet uses a rhetorical question. He poses the question, "Who, my Savior, has struck you, and sentenced you to such torment?" And Gerhardt answers, "You are not a sinner, You are not as we and our children." The poet recognizes his own sinfulness, reflects the need of forgiveness, and sees that this is the reason for the cruel fate dealt to Christ. The third stanza reads as follows:

Wer hat dich so geschlagen,
 mein Heil, und dich mit Plagen
 so uebel zugericht't?
 Du bist ja nicht ein Suender
 wie wir und unsre Kinder,
 von uebeltaten weiszt do nicht.

Mankind had earned eternal death, the death that is the "reward" of sin. However, the Savior took upon Himself this sin and death and through His suffering and death He has made us free from sin and its ultimate consequence, eternal death.¹⁵¹ This is the essence of stanza eight, which reads:

Du springst in's Todes Rachen,
 mich frei und los zu machen
 von solchem Ungeheu'r.
 Mein Störben nimmst du abe,
 vergraebst es in dem Grabe;
 o unerhoertes Liebesfeu'r!

Gerhardt closes the chorale on a confident tone. He rests his confidence upon the suffering of Christ. Perhaps the best commentary on this last stanza is embraced in the English translation of the stanza by John Kelly. The trans-

¹⁵⁰Schulze, op. cit., p. 35.

¹⁵¹Ibid., p. 36.

lation will be quoted after the quotation of the original.

Dein Seufzen und dein Stoeknen
und die viel tausend Traenen,
die dir geflossen zu,
die sollen mich am Ende
in deinen Schoesz und Haende
begleiten zu der ew'gen Ruh'.

Thy groaning and Thy sighing,
Thy bitter tears and dying,
With which Thou wast opprest,--
They shall, when life is ending,
Be guiding and attending
My way to Thine eternal rest.¹⁵²

This entire chorale is an intimate searching into the suffering and death of Christ. It holds up the Christ as the life of the world, and tells the world that this life which Christ wins for them is brought about by what is pictured in the hymn, namely, the suffering and death of Christ. The poet rests His entire hope upon the merit of Christ, for of himself he is helpless. By his own admission, the load of sin would have crushed him. But by faith and trust in Christ he is lifted out of sin, lifted out of the depths of hell and death, and by the Savior is lead from death to life everlasting. This is what Gerhardt proclaims in this chorale. This is the soteriology of the chorale. This is the Gospel.

Luther's Catechism Chorales

Among the chorales that Luther wrote were those which have been called, "Catechism hymns." These chorales incorporate as a basis for their texts the thoughts embraced

¹⁵²The Lutheran Hymnal (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1940), # 171.

in Luther's Catechisms, particularly the phraseology and words of his Small Catechism. You cannot disassociate his Catechism hymns from his Catechism writings, for in effect they are commentaries on one another, written that each might be better understood.¹⁵³

Other than the fact that these chorales treat materials embraced in his Catechism, they were written in the same spirit and with the same intent as were all of Luther's chorales. They breathe the bold, confident, joyful spirit of the same justifying faith which was the beating heart of his theology and piety.¹⁵⁴ As in the consideration of the other chorales in this chapter, we shall attempt to demonstrate the soteriological element in these chorales also.

a. Dies sind die Heil'gen zehn Gebot' 287

It is significant to note that although Luther here deals with the Law, he finds in it another occasion to preach Gospel. In commenting on the Ten Commandments in his "Treatise on Good Works," Luther dismisses the possibility of salvation by works and reemphasizes again that a man is justified by faith. "If righteousness consists of faith," he says, "it is clear that faith fulfills all commandments and makes all works righteous, since no one is justified except he keep all the commandments of God." The righteous man draws his life out of faith and because of his faith he

¹⁵³Schultz, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

¹⁵⁴*Supra*: p. 37.

is counted righteous before God.¹⁵⁵ Thus Luther concludes:
 "We never read that the Holy Spirit was given to anyone
 when he did works, but always when men have heard the Gospel
 of Christ and the mercy of God."¹⁵⁶

In His interpretation of the Commandments Luther uses what has been termed a "spiritual interpretation." For him the First Commandment is the chief source and fountainhead of all the other Commandments. It flows into all the rest, he says, and all return to the First and depend upon it, so that beginning and end are fastened and bound to each other.¹⁵⁷ Luther's treatment of the First Commandment in the hymn version is found in the second stanza of the hymn, quoted here:

Ich bin allein dein Gott, der Herr,
 kein' Goetter sollst du haben mehr;
 du sollst mir ganz vertrauen dich,
 von Herzensgrund lieben mich.
 Kyrieleis!¹⁵⁸

The fulfillment of the First Commandment is by faith. This faith is a confidence deep in the heart which fastens itself upon Christ Jesus. Without this faith there is no work that is able to satisfy this Commandment.¹⁵⁹ Luther says:

Lo! thus must thou form Christ within thyself and
 see how in Him God holds before thee and offers

¹⁵⁵Martin Luther, "Treatise on Good Works," The Works of Martin Luther, Philadelphia edition (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1943), I, 196.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., p. 204.

¹⁵⁷"Large Catechism", Triglot Concordia, p. 677.

¹⁵⁸Kirchengesangbuch, pp. 120 f.

¹⁵⁹Luther, op. cit., pp. 194 f.

thee His mercy without any previous merit of thine own, and from such a view of His grace must thou draw faith and confidence of the forgiveness of all thy sins. Faith, therefore, does not begin with works, neither do they create it, but it must spring up and flow from the blood, wounds and death of Christ.¹⁶⁰

After the congregation has lifted up the mirror of God's law that through it all might see the divine will and man's own sinfulness while contemplating the Ten Commandments, the last stanza presents a plea to Christ for divine grace.¹⁶¹ Luther's plea is based in the reality that Christ became the mediator and as such stands by our side in ready willingness to help in time of need, particularly in our need for salvation. Thus Luther writes:

Das helf' uns der Herr Jesus Christ,
der unser Mittler worden ist;
es ist mit unserm Tun verlor'n,
verdienen doch eitel Zorn.
Kyrieleis!

b. Wir glauben all' an einen Gott 251

"Wir glauben all' an einem Gott," Luther's "großer Glaube," is the German version of an ancient Latin mass hymn from the period of St. Ambrose, "Patrem credimus."¹⁶² Basically the content of this hymn is an expression of the essence of our faith in the triune God.¹⁶³ What is more,

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 203 f.

¹⁶¹ Lambert, op. cit., p. 100.

¹⁶² Sperber, op. cit., p. 120.

¹⁶³ Schulze, op. cit., p. 67.

one cannot disassociate the hymn from Luther's explanation of the Creed in his Catechisms.¹⁶⁴

This faith should be rendered to no one but to God. Therefore, we confess the divinity of Christ and the Holy Ghost when we believe in them even as we believe in the Father; and just as our faith in all three Persons is one and the same faith, so the three Persons are one and the same God.¹⁶⁵ Luther emphasizes that Christ is the key to this faith in God, for no one can believe in the Father or come to the Father by his own learning, works or reason, nor by anything in heaven or earth, save only in and through Jesus Christ.¹⁶⁶ We have no alternative but to say with Schultz concerning the Second Article: "Truly, our whole salvation is grounded in this article."¹⁶⁷ Luther's hymn version of the Second Article is the second stanza of the chorale and reads:

Wir glauben auch an Jesum Christ,
 seinen Sohn und unsern Herren,
 der ewig bei dem Vater ist,
 gleicher Gott von Macht und Ehren;
 von Maria der Jungfrauen,
 ist ein wahrer Mensch geboren
 durch den Heil'gen Geist im Glauben,
 fuer uns, die wir war'n verloren,
 am Kreuz gestorben und vom Tod
 wieder auferstanden durch Gott.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴Schultz, op. cit., p. 81.

¹⁶⁵Martin Luther, "A Brief Explanation of the Ten Commandments, The Creed, and the Lord's Prayer," The Works of Martin Luther, Philadelphia edition (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1943), II, 368-9.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., p. 371.

¹⁶⁷Schultz, op. cit., p. 83.

¹⁶⁸Kirchengesangbuch, p. 123.

The entire Second Article deals with how mankind was redeemed and is based upon the words: "In Jesus Christ our Lord."¹⁶⁹ Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost to the end that he might purify our sinful, fleshly, unclean, damnable conception and make it spiritual through His and His almighty Father's gracious will.¹⁷⁰ Christ bore His cross and passion for sin, the sin of all. He died and was buried to slay entirely and to bury our sin and the sin of all who believe in Him.¹⁷¹ However, perhaps the best way to convey the meaning which Luther wished to convey in the Second stanza of the chorale, and the meaning he wished to convey in his explanation of the Second Article, is to quote his explanation to the Second Article of the Creed as he wrote it in his Small Catechism.

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, in order that I may be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.¹⁷²

But the way to salvation is not yet complete, for no one can come to the Father except through Christ, through

¹⁶⁹"Large Catechism," Triglot Concordia, p. 685.

¹⁷⁰Luther, "A Brief Explanation," p. 371.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

¹⁷²"Small Catechism", Triglot Concordia, p. 545.

His life, suffering and death, and all that has been said of Him. No one can obtain any of His blessings without the aid of the Holy Ghost, by which the Father and the Son teach, quicken, call, draw all that are His, make us, in and through Christ, alive and holy and spiritual, and thus bring us to the Father; for it is by the Holy Ghost that the Father, through Christ and in Christ, works all things and gives life to all.¹⁷³ This is the essence of the third stanza when Luther sings:

Wir glauben an den Heil'gen Geist,
 Gott mit Vater und dem Sohne
 der aller Blbeden Troester heiszt
 und mit Gaben zieret schoene,
 die ganz' Christenheit auf Erden
 haelt in einem Sinn gar eben;
 hier all' Suend' vergeben werden,
 das Fleisch soll auch wieder leben.
 Nach diesem Elend ist bereit
 uns ein Leben in Ewigkeit. Amen.

c. Vater unser im Himmelreich 458

This chorale of Luther is based upon the Lord's Prayer. As in all of Luther's Catechism hymns, this hymn cannot be disassociated from his Catechism writings.¹⁷⁴ Lambert says it is a worthy complement to the Third Part of the Catechism, the wealth of which, in terms of content of thought, would require many sermons to express.¹⁷⁵ Luther's "Vater Unser" is said to be of, if not the best, of Luther's hymns. The

¹⁷³Luther, op. cit., pp. 372 f.

¹⁷⁴Schults, op. cit., p. 155.

¹⁷⁵Lambert, op. cit., p. 120.

Roman Catholic Church, at least some of its members, have had much praise for this chorale of Luther. Commenting on the hymn it was said:

Wenn Luther nicht mehr gethan, so koennte ihm doch die ganze Welt solches nicht genugsam verdanken, noch vergelten. Es ist mehr und auch troestlicher Theologie und reiner Lehre in diesem Liede begriffen, denn in aller Schultheologen Buecher, die ich mein Leben lang gelesen, und ich glaube nicht, dasz alle Pfaffen zu Koehn, Trier und Mainz, wenn sie sich alle zusammenthaelten, ein solches Lied machen koennten.¹⁷⁶

Luther sings in the first stanza:

Vater unser im Himmelreich,
 der du uns alle heiszest gleich
 Brueder sein und dich rufen an
 und willst das Beten von uns hab'n,
 gib, dasz nicht bet' allein der Mund,¹⁷⁷
 hilf, sasz es geh' von Herzensgrund!¹⁷⁷

"Our Father," this means the almighty Father, Who in boundless mercy has not only granted us permission, but by His only beloved Son, Jesus Christ, has bidden and taught us through the merits and mediation of Christ to look to Him as Father and to call Him Father.¹⁷⁸ It is because of this that Luther prays that the Father would grant him above all a true and constant faith in Christ. Luther prays for a fearless hope in the mercy of God despite all the fearfulness of a sinful conscience, and for a thorough love to God and to all mankind, to the end that he might be kept from unbelief and despair.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶Sperber, op. cit., p. 125.

¹⁷⁷Kirchengesangbuch, pp. 123 f.

¹⁷⁸Luther, op. cit., p. 374.

¹⁷⁹Ibid. p. 377.

The Lord's Prayer might well be interpreted in the light of the Second Petition, "Thy kingdom come." Interpreting it in this light it is significant to note what Luther has to say concerning the Second Petition. But first we quote the hymn version, stanza three:

Es komm' dein Reich zu dieser Zeit
und dort hernach in Ewigkeit;
der Heil'ge Geist uns wohne bei
mit seinen Gaben mancherlei;
des Satans Zorn und grosz' Gewalt
zerbrich, vor ihm dein' Kirch' erhalt!

Our present life is spent in a kingdom of sin and wickedness, under one lord, the evil spirit, the source and head of all wickedness and sin; but the kingdom of God is a kingdom of every grace and virtue under one Lord, Jesus Christ God's dear Son, the Head and Source of every grace and virtue.¹⁸⁰ This kingdom of God comes to man when the heavenly Father gives His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace man believes His holy word and leads a godly life here and in eternity.¹⁸¹ The kingdom of God is nothing else than what we learn in the Creed,

. . . that God sent His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, into the world to redeem and deliver us from power of the devil, and to bring us to Himself, and to govern us as a King of righteousness, life, and salvation against sin, death, and an evil conscience, for which end He has bestowed His Holy Ghost, who is to bring these things home to us by His holy Word, and to illumine and strengthen us in the faith by His power.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰Ibid.

¹⁸¹"Small Catechism," p. 547.

¹⁸²"Large Catechism," p. 711.

Not in 7LH
#401 (1931 hymnal)

This chorale, numbered among the Catechism chorales of Luther, sets forth the Lutheran doctrine of baptism.¹⁸³ For Luther there was no greater comfort on earth than baptism. Through it we come under God's declaration of grace and mercy.¹⁸⁴ The joy of baptism lies in the fact that through it God received the sinner, spares him, and makes him pure from day to day.¹⁸⁵ Baptism works forgiveness of sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives in its place eternal salvation to all who believe what the words and promise of God declare.¹⁸⁶ The significance of baptism for Luther is a blessed dying unto sin and a resurrection in the grace of God. The old man, conceived in sin, is drowned, in baptism, and a new man, born in grace, comes forth and rises. "Therefore sins are drowned in baptism, and in place of sin, righteousness comes forth."¹⁸⁷ So we can conclude with Prenter that the content of the promise in the sacrament is God's gift of Christ to us; synonyms for this are none other than salvation, the forgiveness of sin or regeneration.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸³Lambert, op. cit., p. 135.

¹⁸⁴Martin Luther, "A Treatise on Baptism," The Works of Martin Luther, Philadelphia edition (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1943), I, 62.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁸⁶Small Catechism," p. 551.

¹⁸⁷Luther, op. cit., p. 57.

¹⁸⁸Regin Prenter, Spiritus Creator, translated by John M. Jensen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1953), p. 147.

These are the thoughts then, that Luther incorporates in his hymn, "Christ unser Herr, zum Jordan kam." To demonstrate this we quote the third, fourth and seventh stanzas of the chorale.

Solch's hat er und beweiset
klar mit Bildern und mit Worten,
des Vaters Stimm' man offenbar
dasselbst am Jordan hoerte.
Er sprach: Das ist mein lieber Sohn,
an dem ich hab' gefallen,
den will ich euch befohlen hab'n,
dass ihr ihn hoeret alle
und folget seinem Lehren.

Auch Gottes Sohn hier selber steht
in seiner zarten Menschheit,
der Heil'ge Geist herniederfahret,
in Taubenbild verkleidet,
dass wir nicht sollen zweifeln
dran, wenn wir getaufet werden,
all' drei Person'n getaufet hab'n
damit bei uns auf Erden
zu wohnen sich ergeben.¹⁸⁹

These stanzas, the third and the fourth, emphasize the holiness of baptism. All three persons are united in the redemption. The Father takes us as His children; the Son washes us clean with His blood of redemption; the Holy Ghost kindles the faith and seals the covenant of grace.¹⁹⁰

The seventh stanzas embraces the thought that he who is baptised is buried with Christ by baptism into His death. Baptism then presents him with the redemptive power of Christ's blood and reveals baptism as a water of life through the renewing influence of the Holy Ghost.¹⁹¹ The seventh stanza

¹⁸⁹Kirchengesangbuch, pp. 124 f.

¹⁹⁰Schultz, op. cit., p. 162.

¹⁹¹Ibid., p. 163.

reads:

Das Aug' allein das Wasser sieht,
wie Menschen Wasser gieszen;
der Glaub' im Geist die Kraft
verstehet des Blutes Jesu Christi,
und ist vor ihm ein' rote Flut,
von Christi Blut gefaerbet,
die allen Schaden heilen tut,
von Adam her geerbet,
auch von uns selbst begangen.

Therefore, we conclude, we will not base baptism upon our faith, but our faith again shall base and build itself upon baptism.¹⁹²

e. Gott sei gelobet und gebenedeiet 313

The first stanza of this chorale was, in all probability based upon the old Latin sequence hymn, "Lauda Sion salvatorem." To this one stanza Luther added two more, and thus gave to the heritage of Lutheran hymnody one of her most beautiful Communion hymns.¹⁹³

Stanzas one and two of the chorale give thanks for the grace by which Christ gave His flesh and blood to all penitents and believing souls, and for His great love manifested by His bringing life out of death. The third stanza is a heartfelt petition that the Lord might bless the reception of His feast unto a proper walk in life.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹²D. H. Geissinger, "Baptism and Regeneration," The Quarterly Review (October, 1885), p. 224.

¹⁹³Martin Luther, Geistliche Lieder (Muenchen: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1950), p. 93.

¹⁹⁴Lambert, op. cit., p. 107.

We quote all three stanzas here:

Gott sei gelobet und gebendeist,
 der uns selber hat gespeiset
 mit seinem Gleische und mit seinem Blute,
 das gib uns, Herr Gott zugute! Kyrieleison!
 Herr, durch deinen heiligen Leichnam,
 der von deiner Mutter Maria kam,
 und das heilige Blut hilf uns,
 Herr, aus aller Not!
 Kyrieleison!

Der heil'ge Leichnam ist fuer uns gegeben
 zum Tod, dasz wir dadurch leben;
 nicht groeszre Guete konnt' er uns geschenken,
 dabei wir sein soll'n gedenken. Kyrieleison!
 Herr, dein' Lieb' so grosz' dich
 zwungen hat, dasz dein Blut an uns grosz'
 Wunder tat und bezahlt' unsre Schuld,
 dasz uns Gott ist worden hold.
 Kyrieleison!

Gott geb' uns allen seiner Gnade Segen,
 dasz wir gehn auf seinen Wegen in
 rechter Lieb' und bruederlicher Treue,
 dasz uns die Speis' nicht greue. Kyrieleison!
 Herr, dein Heil'ger Geist uns nimmer lass',
 der uns geb' zu halten rechte Masz,
 dasz dein' arm' Christenheit
 leb' in Fried' und Einigkeit!
 Kyrieleison!¹⁹⁵

As in the case of the other Catechism hymns, this hymn cannot be separated from Luther's Catechistical writings, or, for that matter, from his theological writings. Therefore, we use these writings, as we already have, to interpret the chorale and endeavour to arrive at Luther's intended meaning.

To the promise which is given in the sacrament, namely, forgiveness of sin, life and salvation, Christ gives a seal of the promise. He has affixed to the words a powerful seal and sign; this is His own true body and blood under

¹⁹⁵ Kirchengesangbuch, pp. 131 f.

the bread and wine.¹⁹⁶ This presence of Christ, a real presence, is not a momentary religious experience, but a total eschatological, historical act of salvation influencing our whole life.¹⁹⁷ The living Christ comes in the sacrament with His blessings of life, as Luther says: "Therefore, whose eateth of this Bread and drinketh of the Cup, firmly believing the word of Christ, dwelleth in Christ, and Christ in Him, and hath eternal life."¹⁹⁸ The promise of the sacrament and what it bequeaths is simply this, the forgiveness of sins, and with it life and salvation.¹⁹⁹ This all is aptly summed up by Fischer when he says:

All that is promised in the word is here given in the gift of Christ himself, the whole Christ, who died for our sins and rose again for our justification.²⁰⁰

All that has been promised in the Word, the gift of Christ who died for our sins, but more who lives again for our justification: all this was the theme of the Lutheran Chorale from Luther to Gerhardt. This is the soteriological element which this chapter has attempted to demonstrate.

¹⁹⁶ Martin Luther, "A Treatise on the New Testament," The Works of Martin Luther, Philadelphia edition (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1943), II, 301.

¹⁹⁷ Prenter, op. cit., p. 163.

¹⁹⁸ Emil E. Fischer, "The Doctrine of the Real Presence," The Lutheran Church Quarterly (October, 1939), p. 373.

¹⁹⁹ Luther, op. cit., p. 300.

²⁰⁰ Fischer, op. cit., p. 369.

CHAPTER V

THE CHORALE IN TRANSLATION

The chorale is one of the treasures of the Lutheran Church. Since 1523, when Luther began to write "German Psalms" for use in the congregation, the hymn has taken its place in the life of the congregation. Few things are as dear to the Lutheran as the rich heritage of the "singing church."¹ Yet the Lutheran Chorale has not gained popular usage in America. Many of the hymns which have survived in their American environment have survived solely on the strength of their musical settings. If their survival had depended on the words which we read in the hymnals, they probably would have been forgotten long ago.²

For the most part the chorale tunes and settings found in many hymnals have been received warmly and used. But there has been a reluctance toward using the texts with their chorale melodies or settings. Whether or not this is a doctrinal matter, it is not within our scope to say, but the words of Thomas Whitney Surette, in his foreward to the Clough-Leigher edition of chorale settings by Bach, seems to summarize the situation truthfully: "The great melodies

¹Walter Tillmans, "The German Hymn in English Translation", Concordia Theological Monthly (November, 1954), p. 824.

²Walter Tillmans, "Nor any Thanks for It", Lutheran Quarterly (February, 1954), p. 63.

with Bach's contrapuntal treatment are here presented with words which are for the most part of a non-dogmatic character."³

Except for a few hymns like "Beautiful Savior" and spiritual songs like "Silent Night," few of the German hymns are part of Lutheran life in America. None of Luther's hymns, none of Gerhardt's hymns, none of the other hymns of the great hymn writers of Germany have become part and parcel of Lutheran life on the American scene.⁴

Two significant reasons for the Lutheran hymn not having more popular use have been advanced by Tillmanns: 1. poor translations and, 2. faulty interpretations.⁵ In the translation of the chorales the meaning of the original is often changed and the intention of the author ignored. Authors often have taken liberties in their translations and have had little or no regard or interest in preserving the purity of doctrine expressed in the hymns. What they have actually done is to sin against the original emphasis of the poet.⁶ Poetic license may be the excuse for some discrepancies, but on the whole there is no justification for the radical changes from the original.⁷ Often the best

³Johann S. Bach, 131 Chorales in Five Books, edited by H. Clough--Leighter (Boston: E. C. Schirmer Music Company, c.1922). I, n.p.

⁴Tillmanns, "The German Hymn in English Translation," p. 826.

⁵Tillmanns, "Nor Any Thanks Have for It," p. 63.

⁶Tillmanns, "The German Hymn in English Translation," p. 826.

⁷Tillmanns, "Nor Any Thanks Have for It," p. 64.

philological tools have not been used, tools which were not only available, but also necessary for correct translation and interpretation.⁸

The primary concern of this chapter is, however, to see what has been done in translation with the soteriological element expressed in the original texts.

Herr Jesu Christ du hoechstes Gut

Among the translators whom we have consulted is Charles Sanford Terry. Terry edited an anthology of J. S. Bach's chorale harmonizations of chorale tunes. In this edition Terry not only gives the original text of the chorale but also a translation to the stanzas quoted. He does not always quote all stanzas. He is not to be faulted for this, for his primary concern is with Bach's harmonizations. However, it is interesting to see what he does with the texts that he does translate. In this paper we quote only the material which is relevant to our question.

The seventh stanza of the chorale "Herr Jesu christ du hoechstes Gut" reads in the original:

O Herr, mein Gott! Vergib mir doch
um deines blutes Willen,
Und thu in mir das schwere Joeh
Der uebertretung stillen.⁹

⁸Ibid., p. 66.

⁹Charles Sanford Terry, The Four--part Chorales of J. S. Bach: With the German Text of the Hymns and English Translations, (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1929), p. 152.

Terry translates:

O Pitying Lord, forgive me, pray,
The sin Thy wrath's incurred,
Now take its grievous load away
which hath me fast insnared.

Terry recognized the necessity of the forgiveness of sin. However, as is evident, he disregards the idea of the "Blood Atonement." The fact that the forgiveness of sin takes place only through the blood of Christ, expressed in the original, seems to be avoided or ignored.

Herr Jesu Christ, wahr Mensch und Gott

Terry quotes the original text of the first stanza thus:

Herr Jesu Christ, wahr Mensch und Gott,
der du littst Morder, Angst und Spott
Fuer mich am Kreuz und endlich sterbst
und mir deins Vaters Huld erworbst:
Ich bitt durchs bitter Leiden dein,¹⁰
du wollst mir Suender gnaedig sein.

Terry translates this stanza:

Lord Jesus Christ, true man and God,
who suffered torment, shame the rod,
Who bore the cross, accursed tree,
to bring salvation down to me
I pray Thee by Thy bitter woe
Let not Thine anger overflow.

It must be admitted that there is good Gospel present in the translation. However, the emphasis of the original in that God is gracious to the sinner, and that it is by grace that Christ wrought the full pardon of sin, is not brought out. The original says: "Du wollst mir Suender gnaedig sein." Terry, as we have seen, translates: "Let not Thine anger overflow." The testimony to the fact that

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 153.

by Christ's suffering on the cross salvation is ours is weakened when the fact that all this is possible only through grace is by-passed.

Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt

The violation of the original intent of the poet seems to be more flagrant in this chorale than that exhibited in the two previous. We quote here from Terry's text a portion of the first stanza and all of the eighth.

.....
 dasz wir nicht mochten g'nesen
 ohn' Gottes Trost, der uns erloest hat
 von dem groszen Schaden,¹¹

Terry translates this:

.....
 But thanks to God
 Who spares the rod
 From death have we been taken.

Beside the theological implications of God's sparing the rod, the translator weakens the rendition of "erloesen" by translating it "taken." "Taken" does not do justice to the "buy back" idea expressed in the word "redeem" (erloesen). In the eighth stanza of the chorale there is a similar substitution of terms. This substitution has led to a corresponding weakness of emphasis. We quote here the eighth stanza and its translation as it appears in Terry.

Ich bitt' o Herr, aus Herzensgrund,
 du woll'st nicht von mir nehmen
 dein heil'ges Wort aus meinem Mund,
 so wird mich nicht beschaemen

¹¹Ibid., p. 77.

mein Suend' und Schuld,
 denn in dein Huld
 setz ich all mein Vertrauen;
 wer sich nur fest
 darauf verlaest
 der wird den Tod nicht schauen.

O Lord, I pray Thee from my heart
 Ne'er let Thy Word pass from me,
 Nor let my sin hold me apart
 From Thine abounding mercy;
 My sins are great
 And sore my guilt
 Yet e'er Thy love excelleth,
 Who holdeth fast
 To Thee at last,
 One day in heaven dwelleth.

The translation completely misses the idea of the trusting confidence which is implied in the word "vertrauen." Terry weakens the idea of resting completely on the mercy and grace of God, expressed in the term "Huld," and reinforced with the phrase "darauf verlaesst."

The hope of the child of God is not a hope of reward. The gift of heaven is, of course, something for which the Christian hopes, but his real desire is to know that he has been delivered from death. Spiritual death, which is separation from God, and its resultant consequences no longer hold sway. The child of God has been made alive by the merits of Christ Jesus and the Spirit-inspired faith he places in the merit of Christ. This shifting of emphasis from the concept of "deliverence" to the concept of "reward" is the implied meaning in the mistranslation and resultant misinterpretation in rendering the words "der wird den Tod nicht schauen," "One day in heav'n dwelleth."

Es ist das Heil uns kommen her

In consulting various translations of this chorale, one dominant fact was apparant. We refer to the peculiar aversion of rendering the word "Mittler" with the English equivalent "mediator."

This mistranslation of the word, which Terry renders, "to God His manhood joined us," is only the culmination of a complete watering down of the intent of the original. We quote here the first stanza of the original and follow it with Terry's translation.

Es ist das Heil uns kommen her
 von Gnad' und lauter Guete,
 die Werke helfen nimmermehr,
 sie moegen nicht behueten;
 der Glaub' sieht Jesum Christum an,
 der hat g'nug fuer uns all' getan,
 er ist der Mittler worden,

Salvation now is come to earth
 Bounty and grace bestowing.
 No man by works can prove his worth
 Or win by his own doing.
 'Tis faith sees Jesus Christ alohe,
 Who for our sins did once atone
 To God His manhood joined us.¹²

As already noted, Terry weakens the meaning of mediator. It is also to be noted that at the same time he weakens the emphasis that it is by grace alone that we are saved. Terry lets the fact that Christ did all, the thought expressed in the second last verse in the words, "der hat g'nug fuer uns all' getan", slip by without consideration. This again is only a culminating verse of what was expressed previously.

¹²Ibid., p. 92.

Terry translated, "No man by works can prove his worth or win by his own doing;" this may be beautiful poetry, but it does not convey the strength of the intended meaning of the original. It is only when you preserve the strong intention of the original that the power of Christ's work and merit can be brought out, as it is in the last three verses of the stanza.

• • • • •
 der Glaub sieht Jesum Christum an,
 der hat g'nug fuer uns getan,
 er ist der Mittler worden.

It is also significant that in the translation which appears in The Lutheran Hymnal of the Lutheran Church-- Missouri Synod there also is a weakening of the concept of the "mediator." We quote here the translation as it appears in the hymnal. We do not repeat the original text.

Salvation unto us has come
 By God's free grace and favor;
 Good works cannot avert our doom,
 They help and save us never.
 Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone,
 Who did for all the world atone;
 He is our one Redeemer.¹³

It is not our intent to say that this stanza, as well as Terry's version, does not contain Gospel. As a matter of fact both embrace much Gospel content. But this does not alter the fact that the message was weakened in the rendering of "Mittler" as "Redeemer," and by "To God His manhood joined us" as in the Terry translation.

¹³The Lutheran Hymnal (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1941), #377.

Wenn wir in hoechsten Noeten sein

It might be well to point out another instance in The Lutheran Hymnal where the intent of the original has been violated. We quote the fourth stanza of the chorale "Wenn wir in hoechsten Noeten sein" and its translation as it appears in the Lutheran Hymnal of 1941.

Die du verheiszest gnaediglich allen,
die darum bitten dich im Namen
dein's Sohns Jesu Christ,
der unser Heil und Fuersprech ist.¹⁴

For Thou hast promised graciously
To hear all those who cry to Thee
Thro' Him whose name alone is great,
Our Savior and our Advocate.¹⁵

The most obvious, and probably the most significant, deviation is the indefiniteness of the translation in defining completely who the Saviour and Advocate is. Whereas the original is thoroughly specific, the translation is couched in very ambiguous terminology; the original specifically states "in the name of your Son Jesus Christ;" the translation states ambiguously "Thro' Him whose name alone is great."

O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden

This chorale, in one translation or another, appears in hymnals of many denominations. Next to "Ein' feste Burg,"

¹⁴Kirchengesangbuch fuer Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), p. 285.

¹⁵The Lutheran Hymnal, # 522.

it is perhaps the most used German chorale in the hymnals in the English language. Here we consider the translation as it appears in Cantate Domino, a hymnal published in Geneva, Switzerland for student use. We quote stanza four of the original and its translation by Robert Bridges:

Nun, was du Herr, erduldet,
Ist alles meine Last,
Ich, ich hab es verschuldet,
Was du getragen hast.
Schau her! hier steh ich armer,
Der Zorn verdienet hat.
Gib mir, o mein Erbarmer,
Den Anblick deines Gnad!

Thine beauty, long desired,
Hath vanished from our sight;
Thy power is all expired,
and quenched the light of light.
Ah me! for whom Thou diest,
Hide not so far Thy grace:
Show me, O Love most highest,
The brightness of Thy face.¹⁶

The translator seems to have a peculiar aversion to the concept of sin and guilt as expressed by Gerhardt in the original. Bridges makes no mention of the fact that it was our sin and guilt for which Christ died. He does say that Christ died for us, but he leaves unsaid that Christ died because of us too.

The Gospel content is also weakened considerably in the translation; "Love most highest" certainly does not convey the same force as "Erbarmer;" and "brightness" is far from an adequate rendition of "Gnad."

¹⁶Cantate Domino (Geneva Switzerland: World's Student Christian Federation Hymnal, c.1951), # 23.

Fröhlich soll mein Herze springen

In the edition of some hymnals paraphrases rather than translations of the chorales are used. This is the case in the Episcopalian hymnal Songs of Praise. The chorale "Fröhlich soll" is treated in this manner in this hymnal. Of the fifteen stanzas of the chorale only four are paraphrased. The fourth stanza of the paraphrase is so vague that the source of the original text could not be determined. We quote this stanza:

Art and science circle o'er Thee,
 Counsel, might,
 Left and right;
 Wisdom rides before Thee.
 Plans and pleas of men are hollow:
 Son of God
 At Thy nod
 We will up and follow.¹⁷

Whether or not there was a proclamation of the Gospel in the original which forms the basis of this paraphrase is difficult to determine because the source has been undetermined. It would be difficult to imagine Paul Gerhardt writing any stanza of a hymn embracing the thoughts in the stanza quoted. The point is, however, that in a paraphrase, unless the author is sensitive to the original intent of the poet, the thought content of the original is often destroyed. The stanza stands as a testimony to what can happen to a hymn and its meaning when one starts to paraphrase or when it gets into the hands of a unsympathetic translator.

¹⁷Songs of Praise, enlarged edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), # 89.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

On the basis of my study presented in this paper, I have no alternative but to come to the conclusion that the Lutheran Chorale of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries contains a definite soteriological element. The proclamation of the Gospel is positive and unmistakable. Whatever other charges may be levied against the Lutheran Chorale, the charge that it fails to proclaim the Gospel is invalid and unreasonable.

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