

CFBC Hymnology Class 6

German Hymnody in the 1600s- Part 1 (Hymns written in the furnace of affliction)

The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648)

The Thirty Years' War had a significant influence on German hymnody. Beginning first as a Catholic-Protestant conflict, it spread rapidly until it became a political and religious struggle engaging, at one time or another, the entire continent. Silesia and Saxony, provinces of Germany, became the battlefields on which nations fought for three decades.

Sydney Moore has effectively described the poignance of the times:

“It was a time when men’s hearts failed them for fear. State hurled itself at the head of state, army at the head of army, and those who fell not in battle perished before the still deadlier scourges of plague and famine. The very abomination of desolation seemed to be set up: raping and pillage, outrage and slaughter reigned unchecked and unconfined. In vain, to all outward appearances, did the saints cry: How long? Yet of their cries and tears. and of the amazing tenacity of their faith, the hymns they have left us bear indefatigable witness.”

...Reliance upon an omnipotent God, for comfort and consolation, was written into the hymns of the period...

A Survey of Christian Hymnody, pp.22.23

“What will make the world *taste* (the salt) and *see* (the light) of Christ in us is not that we love wealth the same way they do. Rather, it will be the willingness and the ability of Christians to love others through suffering, all the while rejoicing because their reward is in heaven with Jesus. This is inexplicable on human terms. This is supernatural.”

John Piper

Martin Rinkert (1586-1649)...German Lutheran Pastor and Hymnwriter

“Now Thank We All Our God”...The Story behind the hymn

Martin Rinkert was a German pastor who at the age of 31 came to be the pastor of a church in his hometown of Eilenburg in Germany. He arrived there in 1618, just as the Thirty Years War broke out, one of the bloodiest wars of all history.

That war brought great devastation throughout all Europe. In fact, the population of Germany was reduced from 16 million to 6 million during those 30 years. The city of Eilenburg, where Rinkert was the pastor, experienced wave after wave of pestilence and famine.

The coming and going of invading armies marched through the city and left death and destruction in their wake. The city became overcrowded with refugees from the war. In 1637, in the midst of this war, a plague broke out.

The other two ministers in the town died, but Rinkert stayed in the town and carried on their work as well as his own. All day long, day after day throughout that year, he went from bed to bed nursing the sick and cheering and praying with the dying.

He buried about 5,000 people that year, including his own wife, sometimes reading a funeral service over 40 or 50 bodies at a time. Rinkert himself died a year after the war ended.

But some time during that bleak period of his life and in the life of his city, he composed a great hymn of thanksgiving. It was said to have been a table grace for his children, written in the midst of those devastating circumstances.

<http://www.reviveourhearts.com//radio/roh/today.php?pid=1302>

98: Now Thank We All Our God (ca 1636)

1 *Now thank we all our God*
With heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom his world rejoices;
Who from our mothers' arms,
Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today.

2 O may *this bounteous God*
Through all our life ***be near us***
With ever joyful hearts
And blessed peace to ***cheer us;***
And ***keep us*** in his grace,
And ***guide us*** when perplexed,
And ***free us*** from all ills
In this world and the next.

**3 All praise and thanks to God,
The Father, now be given,
The Son, and him who reigns
With them in highest heaven,
The one eternal God
Whom earth and heav'n adore;
For thus it was, is now,
And shall be evermore.**

(Note the allusion to the Gloria Patri in the third stanza)

Author: Martin Rinckart (1636)
Translator: Catherine Winkworth (1858)
Meter: 6.7.6.7.6.6.6.6.
Scripture: 1 Chronicles 29:13

Johann Cruger composed the tune, and the modern arrangement was made by Felix Mendelssohn.

<http://lavistachurchofchrist.org/LVarticles/GermanHymnsOfTheReformation.htm>

Also around 1630, a Lutheran scholar and minister in Loben named Johann Heermann wrote several hymns, one of which is "O Jesu Christe, wahres Licht." It was translated into English by Catherine Winkworth in 1858 as 'O Christ, Our True and Only Light.'

Heermann, Johann, son of Johannes Heermann, furrier at Baudten, near Wohlau, Silesia, was born at Baudten, Oct. 11, 1585. He was the fifth but only surviving child of his parents, and during a severe illness in his childhood his mother vowed that if he recovered she would educate him for the ministry, even though she had to beg the necessary money. He passed through the schools at Wohlau; at Fraustadt (where he lived in the house of Valerius Herberger, q. v., who took a great interest in him); the St. Elizabeth gymnasium at Breslau; and the gymnasium at Brieg. At Easter, 1609, he accompanied two young noblemen (sons of Baron Wenzel von Rothkirch), to whom he had been tutor at Brieg, to the University of Strassburg; but an affection of the eyes caused him to return to Baudten in 1610. At the recommendation of Baron Wenzel he was appointed diaconus of Koben, a small town on the Oder, not far from Baudten, and entered on his duties on Ascension Day, 1611, and on St. Martin's Day, 1611, was promoted to the pastorate there. After 1623 he suffered much from an affection of the throat, which compelled him to cease preaching in 1634, his place being supplied by assistants. In October, 1638, he retired to Lissa in Posen, and died there on Septuagesima Sunday (Feb. 17), 1647.

Much of Heermann's manhood was spent amid the distressing scenes of the Thirty Years' War; and by his own ill health and his domestic trials he was trained to write his beautiful hymns of "Cross and Consolation." Between 1629 and 1634, Koben was plundered four times by the Lichtenstein dragoons and the rough hordes under Wallenstein sent into Silesia by the King of Austria in order to bring about the Counter-Reformation and restore the Roman Catholic faith and practice; while in 1616 the town was devastated by fire, and in 1631 by pestilence.

In these troublous years Heermann several times lost all his moveables; once he had to keep away from Koben for seventeen weeks; twice he was nearly sabred; and once, while crossing the Oder in a frail boat loaded almost to sinking, he heard the bullets of the pursuing soldiers whistle just over his head. He bore all with courage and patience, and he and his were wonderfully preserved from death and dishonour. He was thus well grounded in the school of affliction, and in his *House and Heart Music* some of his finest hymns are in the section entitled "Songs of Tears. In the time of the persecution and distress of pious Christians."

As a hymnwriter Heermann ranks with the best of his century, some indeed regarding him as second only to Gerhardt. He had begun writing Latin poems about 1605, and was crowned as a poet at Brieg on Oct. 8, 1608. He marks the transition from the objective standpoint of the hymnwriters of the Reformation period to the more subjective and experimental school that followed him. His hymns are distinguished by depth and tenderness of feeling; by firm faith and confidence in face of trial; by deep love to Christ, and humble submission to the will of God. Many of them became at once popular, passed into the hymnbooks, and still hold their place among the classics of German hymnody.

Hymnary.org

"The providence of God is like Hebrew words—it can be read only backwards."

John Flavel (1627–1691)

"Of Providence"...Westminster Confession of Faith (1646)...

I. God the great Creator of all things does uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.

VII. As the providence of God does, in general, reach to all creatures; so, after a most special manner, it takes care of His Church, and disposes all things to the good thereof.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647) on Providence...

Quest. 11. What are God's works of providence?

Ans. 11. God's works of providence are, his most holy,(1) wise,(2) and powerful preserving(3) and governing all his creatures, and all their actions.(4)

(1) Ps. 145:17.

(2) Ps. 104:24; Isa. 28:29.

(3) Heb. 1:3.

(4) Ps. 103:19; Matt. 10:29-31.

Georg Neumark (1621-1681)

“If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee”...The Story behind the hymn

Desperate Georg Neumark Let God Guide Him

Dan Graves

Things appeared desperate for Georg Neumark. Walking cross country in the early Autumn of 1641 to begin his studies at the University of Konigsberg, the young German scholar was robbed of virtually everything he owned. With no money left to pay for food or classes, George had to drop out of college and look for work. He was hungry, poorly clothed, forced to take whatever shelter he could find as the cold weather came on.

He went back to Magdeburg but could find no work there. However, he made friends easily, and they pointed him to different cities. But he had no more success in the next three cities he tried: Luneburg, Winsen or Hamburg. He passed on to Keil. The chief pastor of Keil, Nicolaus Becker took an interest in Georg. Like Georg, he was from Thuringia. However, he could find him no immediate work. It was now December. What was Georg to do?

At this darkest moment, a miracle happened. A tutor in a prominent family fell into disgrace and fled. Nicolaus Becker recommended Georg for the position and he was hired. Georg's response was to burst into a hymn of praise, "on that very day."

If thou but suffer God to guide thee
And hope in Him through all thy ways,
He'll give thee strength, whate'er betide thee,
And bear thee through the evil days....

Sing, pray, and keep His ways unswerving,
Perform thy duties faithfully,
And trust His Word: though undeserving,
Thou yet shalt find it true for thee.

God never yet forsook in need
The soul that trusted Him indeed.

We remember George Neumark mainly because of that one hymn and the tune he composed for it. For two years he worked and saved his money, finally getting together enough to enter University. In 1646 he again lost everything he owned, this time to a fire.

However, he was able to complete his studies and return to his homeland. There Duke Wilhelm II of Sachse-Weimar recognized his merits and gave him a trusted position.

Georg went blind shortly before he died, but the court allowed him to keep his jobs with their badly-needed income right to the end. He died on this day, July 18, 1681, having turned 60 shortly before. He had performed his part faithfully and God did not forsake him, bearing him through the evil days.

<https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1601-1700/desperate-georg-neumark-let-god-guide-him-11630166.html>

Psalm 37¹Do not fret because of evildoers,
Be not envious toward wrongdoers.
²For they will wither quickly like the grass
And fade like the green herb.
³Trust in the LORD and do good;
Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.
⁴Delight yourself in the LORD;
And He will give you the desires of your heart.
⁵Commit your way to the LORD,
Trust also in Him, and He will do it.
⁶He will bring forth your righteousness as the light
And your judgment as the noonday.
⁷Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him;
Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,
Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes.
⁸Cease from anger and forsake wrath;
Do not fret; it leads only to evildoing.

Hebrews 13:5b He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU

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1 If thou but suffer God to guide thee,
And **hope in him through all thy ways**,
He'll give thee strength, whate'er betide thee,
And bear thee through the evil days:
Who trusts in God's unchanging love
Builds on the rock that naught can move.

2 **What can these anxious cares avail thee**,
These never-ceasing moans and sighs?
What can it help, if thou bewail thee
O'er each dark moment as it flies?
Our cross and trials do but press
The heavier for our bitterness.

3 **Only be still, and wait his leisure**
In cheerful hope, with heart content
To take whate'er thy Father's pleasure
And all deserving love hath sent;
Nor doubt our inmost wants are known
To him who chose us for his own.

4 All are alike before the Highest;
'Tis easy to our God, we know,
To raise thee up though low thou liest,
To make the rich man poor and low;
True wonders still by him are wrought
Who setteth up and brings to naught.

5 **Sing, pray, and keep his ways unswerving**,
So do thine own part faithfully,
And trust his word--though undeserving,
Thou yet shalt find it true for thee;
God never yet forsook at need
The soul that trusted him indeed.

Author: Georg Neumark
Translator: Catherine Winkworth (1855, 1863)
Meter: 9.8.9.8.8.8.
Scripture: Psalm 55:22

The Missing Stanza (in “If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee”)

Lig Duncan

In most of our hymnals, we don't have all the stanzas. There were something like seven stanzas, or maybe one more of that written to it. And so in between the second and third stanzas there are some other – by the way, beautiful – lines that Catherine Winkworth translates out of it. In fact, I'll share with you just a couple of those lines that you don't typically get in your English hymnbooks:

“He knows the time of joy, and truly
will send it when He sees it meet.
When He has tried and purged thee throughly,
and finds thee free from all deceit,
He comes to thee all unaware,
and makes thee own His loving care.”

You know, forty years later he records in a diary this incident of the robbery, and he says about the writing of this hymn:

“Which good fortune coming suddenly, and as if falling
from heaven, greatly rejoiced me. And on that very day I
composed to the honor of my beloved Lord this hymn.”

And then he says

“I had certainly cause enough to thank the Divine
Compassion for such unlooked for grace shown to me.”

Lig Duncan, First Presbyterian Church of Jackson, MS
http://fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/Radio%20Programs/Hymns_of_the_Faith/HOF_Vol_1/01b_if_thou_but_suffer_god_to_guide.htm

Appendix- Catherine Winkworth (1827-1878)

Catherine Winkworth was the foremost 19th century translator of German hymns into English. Her translations, with alterations, are still the most widely used of any from German and are used extensively in many denominational hymnals, especially in Lutheran hymnals published in the United States.

Catherine Winkworth was born in No. 20, Ely Place, Holborn, London, England, on September 13, 1827. In 1829, her parents moved to Manchester while she was two as her father had a silk mill (possibly at Macclesfield).

Two of her sisters, Emily and Susanna, were left with their grandmother Winkworth and her daughter, Eliza, at Islington.

When they followed their parents to Manchester they had lessons from the Rev. William Gaskell, minister of Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, and husband of the well-known novelist. Catherine Winkworth lived most of her life in Manchester, England (the notable exception was the year she spent in Dresden, Germany).

For nearly two years from January, 1848, Catherine had a long period of ill-health.

In 1852, Catherine undertook active work among the poor in the newly-established Sunday School & District Visiting Society. She was regarded with extreme affection by the poor, and long after she left the neighborhood, she used to receive occasional letters from them.

During her time in Manchester, Catherine came to know Chevalier Bunsen (Christian Karl Josias Bunsen, 1791-1860), who started Catherine & Susanna in their literary work, and to whom Catherine dedicated her *Lyra Germanica* (First Series).

Bunsen, the German ambassador to England, who presented her a copy of *Andachtsbuch*, a German devotional book with German hymns, which opened to treasures of German hymnody to her. She went on to publish two series of *Lyra Germanica*, 1855 and 1858. The first series were 103 translations from Bunsen's *Versuch eines allgemeinen Gesang und Gebetbuchs*, 1833, which went to 23 editions; the second series contained 121 more translations from the same book and was published in 12 editions.

Most of the winter of 1859 was spent by Catherine and Susanna, at Malvern owing to illness. Catching a fresh chill, Catherine had to stay on at Malvern till October, when they moved to Westen for a change of air. They arrived home at Alderley in time for Christmas, 1859.

In February 1861, their father was taken ill; this was the beginning of his complete breakdown in health, which obliged him to give up his business, and ultimately led to the family leaving Thornfield, Alderley Edge, and moving to Clifton, a suburb of Bristol, in October 1862. Here, she became active in promoting higher education for women. This interest manifested itself in her translations from German of biographies of two founders of sisterhoods for the poor and the sick: *Life of Pastor Fliedner*, 1861, and *Life of Amelia Sieveking*, 1863.

Also in 1861, Susanna had a serious illness which left her more or less of an invalid for some years. In spite of this ill-health, the sisters continued with their translations of German works and made several visits abroad.

In 1863, she came out with *The Chorale Book for England*, which contained some of the earlier translations with their proper chorale tunes. In 1869, she published *Christian Singers of Germany*, which contained the biographies of German hymn writers, together with numerous hymns. More than any other single person, she helped bring the German chorale tradition to the English speaking world.

Dr. James Martineau said: "Her translations ... are invariably faithful and, for the most part, both terse and delicate; and an admirable art is applied to the management of complex and difficult versification." "Miss Winkworth," says Dr. John Julian, *Dictionary of Hymnology*, "although not the earliest of modern translators of German into English, is certainly the foremost in rank and popularity. Her translations are the most widely used of any from that language, and have had more to do with the modern revival of the English use of German hymns than the versions of any other writer." She possessed great intellectual and social gifts, and was unusually gifted as a translator of hymns.

http://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns_and_Carols/Biographies/catherine_winkworth.htm