

# MARTIN LUTHER

DR. MARTIN LUTHER'S  
DEUTSCHE GEISTLICHE  
LIEDER

Martin Luther

**Dr. Martin Luther's  
Deutsche Geistliche Lieder**

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# **Martin Luther**

## **Dr. Martin Luther's Deutsche Geistliche Lieder / The Hymns of Martin Luther Set to Their Original Melodies, With an English Version**

### **INTRODUCTION**

A fit motto for the history of the Reformation would be those words out of the history of the Day of Pentecost, "How hear we, every man in our own tongue wherein we were born...the wonderful works of God!" The ruling thought of the pre-reformation period was not more the maintenance of one Holy Roman Church than of one Holy Roman Empire, each of which was to comprehend all Christendom. The language of the Roman Church and Empire was the sacred language in comparison with which the languages of men's common speech were reckoned common and unclean. The coming-in of the Reformation was the awakening of individual life, by enforcing the sense of each man's direct responsibility to God; but it was equally the quickening of a true national life. In the light of the new era, the realization of the promise of the oneness of the Church was no longer to be sought in the universal dominance of a hierarchical corporation; nor was the "mystery" proclaimed by Paul, that "the nations were fellow-heirs and of one body," to be fulfilled in the subjugation of all nations to a central potentate. According to the spirit of the Reformation, the One Church was to be, not a corporation, but a communion – the communion of saints; and the unity of mankind, in its many nations, was to be a unity of the spirit in the bond of mutual peace.

The two great works of Martin Luther were those by which he gave to the common people a vernacular Bible and vernacular worship, that through the one, God might speak directly to the people; and in the other, the people might speak directly to God. Luther's Bible and Luther's Hymns gave life not only to the churches of the Reformation, but to German nationality and the German language. Concerning the hymns of Luther the words of several notable writers are on record, and are worthy to be prefixed to the volume of them.

Says Spangenberg, yet in Luther's life-time, in his Preface to the *Cithara Lutheri*, 1545: "One must certainly let this be true, and remain true, that among all Mastersingers from the days of the Apostles until now, Luther is and always will be the best and most accomplished; in whose hymns and songs one does not find a vain or needless word. All flows and falls in the sweetest and neatest manner, full of spirit and doctrine, so that his every word gives outright a sermon of his own, or at least a singular reminiscence. There is nothing forced, nothing foisted in or patched up, nothing fragmentary. The rhymes are easy and good, the words choice and proper, the meaning clear and intelligible, the melodies lovely and hearty, and *in summa* all is so rare and majestic, so full of pith and power, so cheering and comforting, that, in sooth, you will not find his equal, much less his master."<sup>1</sup>

The following words have often been quoted from Samuel Taylor Coleridge:

"Luther did as much for the Reformation by his hymns as by his translation of the Bible. In Germany the hymns are known by heart by every peasant; they advise, they argue from the hymns, and every soul in the church praises God like a Christian, with words which are natural and yet sacred to his mind."

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in the *Christian Examiner*, 1860, p. 240; transcribed Philadelphia, 1875.

A striking passage in an article by Heine in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* for March, 1834, is transcribed by Michelet in his *Life of Luther*:

"Not less remarkable, not less significant than his prose works, are Luther's poems, those stirring songs which, as it were, escaped from him in the very midst of his combats and his necessities like a flower making its way from between rough stones, or a moonbeam gleaming amid dark clouds. Luther loved music; indeed, he wrote treatises on the art. Accordingly his versification is highly harmonious, so that he may be called the Swan of Eisleben. Not that he is by any means gentle or swan-like in the songs which he composed for the purpose of exciting the courage of the people. In these he is fervent, fierce. The hymn which he composed on his way to Worms, and which he and his companion chanted as they entered that city,<sup>2</sup> is a regular war-song. The old cathedral trembled when it heard these novel sounds. The very rooks flew from their nests in the towers. That hymn, the Marseillaise of the Reformation, has preserved to this day its potent spell over German hearts."

The words of Thomas Carlyle are not less emphatic, while they penetrate deeper into the secret of the power of Luther's hymns:

"The great Reformer's love of music and poetry, it has often been remarked, is one of the most significant features in his character. But indeed if every great man is intrinsically a poet, an idealist, with more or less completeness of utterance, which of all our great men, in these modern ages, had such an endowment in that kind as Luther? He it was, emphatically, who stood based on the spiritual world of man, and only by the footing and power he had obtained there, could work such changes on the material world. As a participant and dispenser of divine influence, he shows himself among human affairs a true connecting medium and visible messenger between heaven and earth, a man, therefore, not only permitted to enter the sphere of poetry, but to dwell in the purest centre thereof, perhaps the most inspired of all teachers since the Apostles. Unhappily or happily, Luther's poetic feeling did not so much learn to express itself in fit words, that take captive every ear, as in fit actions, wherein, truly under still more impressive manifestations, the spirit of spheral melody resides and still audibly addresses us. In his written poems, we find little save that strength of on 'whose words,' it has been said, 'were half-battles'<sup>3</sup>— little of that still harmony and blending softness of union which is the last perfection of strength — less of it than even his conduct manifested. With words he had not learned to make music — it was by deeds of love or heroic valor that he spoke freely. Nevertheless, though in imperfect articulation, the same voice, if we listen well, is to be heard also in his writings, in his poems. The one entitled *Ein' Feste Burg*, universally regarded as the best, jars upon our ears; yet there is something in it like the sound of Alpine avalanches, or the first murmur of earthquakes, in the very vastness of which dissonance a higher unison is revealed to us. Luther wrote this song in times of blackest threatenings, which, however, could in no sense become a time of despair. In these tones, rugged and broken as they are, do we hear the accents of that summoned man, who answered his friends' warning not to enter Worms, in this wise: — 'Were there as many devils in Worms as these tile roofs, I would on'; of him who, alone in that assemblage before all emperors and principalities and powers, spoke forth these final and forever memorable words, — 'It is neither safe nor prudent to do aught against conscience. Till such time as either by proofs from holy Scripture, or by fair reason or argument, I have been confuted and convicted, I cannot and will not recant. Here I stand — I cannot do otherwise — God be my help, Amen.' It is evident enough that to this man all popes, cardinals,

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<sup>2</sup> The popular impression that the hymn "Ein' feste Burg" was produced in these circumstances is due, doubtless, to a parallel in the third stanza, to the famous saying imputed to Luther on the eve of the Diet of Worms: "I'll go, be there as many devils in the city as there be tiles on the roofs." The time of its composition was in the year 1529, just before the Diet of Augsburg. If not written in his temporary refuge, the noble "Burg" or "Festung" of Coburg, it must often have been sung there by him; and it was sung, says Merle d'Aubigne, "during the Diet, not only at Augsburg, but in all the churches of Saxony."

<sup>3</sup> This much-quoted phrase is from Richter. It is reported as an expression of Melancthon, looking on Luther's picture, "*Fulmina erant singula verba tua.*"

emperors, devils, all hosts and nations were but weak, weak as the forest with all its strong trees might be to the smallest spark of electric fire."

In a very different style of language, but in a like strain of eulogy, writes Dr. Merle d'Aubigne, in the third volume of his *History of the Reformation*: "The church was no longer composed of priests and monks; it was now the congregation of believers. All were to take part in worship, and the chanting of the clergy was to be succeeded by the psalmody of the people. Luther, accordingly, in translating the psalms, thought of adapting them to be sung by the church. Thus a taste for music was diffused throughout the nation. From Luther's time, the people sang; the Bible inspired their songs. Poetry received the same impulse. In celebrating the praises of God, the people could not confine themselves to mere translations of ancient anthems. The souls of Luther and of several of his contemporaries, elevated by their faith to thoughts the most sublime, excited to enthusiasm by the struggles and dangers by which the church at its birth was unceasingly threatened, inspired by the poetic genius of the Old Testament and by the faith of the New, ere long gave vent to their feelings in hymns, in which all that is most heavenly in poetry and music was combined and blended. Hence the revival, in the sixteenth century, of *hymns* such as in the first century used to cheer the martyrs in their sufferings. We have seen Luther, in 1523, employing it to celebrate the martyrs at Brussels; other children of the Reformation followed his footsteps; hymns were multiplied; they spread rapidly among the people, and powerfully contributed to rouse it from sleep."

It is not difficult to come approximately at the order of composition of Luther's hymns. The earliest hymn-book of the Reformation – if not the earliest of all printed hymn-books – was published at Wittenberg in 1524, and contained *eight* hymns, four of them from the pen of Luther himself; of the other four not less than three were by Paul Speratus, and one of these three, the hymn *Es ist das Heil*, which caused Luther such delight when sung beneath his window by a wanderer from Prussia.<sup>4</sup> Three of Luther's contributions to this little book were versions of Psalms – the xii, xiv, and cxxx – and the fourth was that touching utterance of personal religious experience, *Nun fruet euch, lieben Christen g'mein*. But the critics can hardly be mistaken in assigning as early a date to the ballad of the Martyrs of Brussels. Their martyrdom took place July 1, 1523, and the "New Song" must have been inspired by the story as it was first brought to Wittenberg, although it is not found in print until the *Enchiridion*, which followed the *Eight Hymns*, later in the same year, from the press of Erfurt, and contained fourteen of Luther's hymns beside the four already published.

In the hymn-book published in 1525 by the composer Walter, Luther's friend, were six more of the Luther hymns. And in 1526 appeared the "German Mass and Order of Divine Service," containing "the German Sanctus," a versification of Isaiah vi. Of the remaining eleven, six appeared first in the successive editions of Joseph Klug's hymn-book, Wittenberg, 1535 and 1543. It is appropriate to the commemorative character of the present edition that in it the hymns should be disposed in chronological order.

The TUNES which are here printed with the hymns of Luther are of those which were set to them during his lifetime. Some of them, like the hymns to which they were set, are derived from the more ancient hymnody of the German and Latin churches. Others, as the tunes *Vom Himmel hoch*, *Ach Gott vom Himmel*, and *Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam*, are conjectured to have been originally secular airs. But that many of the tunes that appeared simultaneously and in connection with Luther's hymns were original with Luther himself, there seems no good reason to doubt. Luther's singular delight and proficiency in music are certified by a hundred contemporary testimonies. His enthusiasm for it overflows in his Letters and his Table Talk. He loved to surround himself with accomplished musicians, with whom he would practise the intricate motets of the masters of that age; and his critical remarks on their several styles are on record. At least one autograph document proves him to have been a composer of melodies to his own words: one may see, appended to von

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<sup>4</sup> Merle d'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation*, Vol. III.

Winterfeld's fine quarto edition of Luther's hymns (Leipzig, 1840) a fac-simile of the original draft of *Vater Unser*, with a melody sketched upon a staff of five lines, and then cancelled, evidently by hand practised in musical notation. But perhaps the most direct testimony to his actual work as a composer is found in a letter from the composer John Walter, capellmeister to the Elector of Saxony, written in his old age for the express purpose of embodying his reminiscences of his illustrious friend as a church-musician.

"It is to my certain knowledge," writes Walter, "that that holy man of God, Luther, prophet and apostle to the German nation, took great delight in music, both in choral and in figural composition. With whom I have passed many a delightful hour in singing; and oftentimes have seen the dear man wax so happy and merry in heart over the singing as that it was well-nigh impossible to weary or content him therewithal. And his discourse concerning music was most noble.

"Some forty years ago, when he would set up the German Mass at Wittenberg, he wrote to the Elector of Saxony and Duke Johannsen, of illustrious memory, begging to invite to Wittenberg the old musician Conrad Rupff and myself, to consult with him as to the character and the proper notation of the Eight Tones; and he finally himself decided to appropriate the Eighth Tone to the Epistle and the Sixth Tone to the Gospel, speaking on this wise: Our Lord Christ is a good Friend, and his words are full of love; so we will take the Sixth Tone for the Gospel. And since Saint Paul is a very earnest apostle we will set the Eighth Tone to the Epistle. So he himself made the notes over the Epistles, and the Gospels, and the Words of Institution of the true Body and Blood of Christ, and sung them over to me to get my judgment thereon. He kept me three weeks long at Wittenberg, to write out the notes over some of the Gospels and Epistles, until the first German Mass was sung in the parish church. And I must needs stay to hear it, and take with me a copy of the Mass to Torgau and present it to His Grace the Elector from Doctor Luther.

"Furthermore, he gave orders to re-establish the Vespers, which in many places were fallen into disuse, with short plain choral hymns for the students and boys; withal, that the charity-scholars, collecting their bread, should sing from door to door Latin Hymns, Anthems and Responses, appropriate to the season. It was no satisfaction to him that the scholars should sing in the streets nothing but German songs....The most profitable songs for the common multitude are the plain psalms and hymns, both Luther's and the earlier ones; but the Latin songs are useful for the learned and for students. We see, and hear, and clearly apprehend how the Holy Ghost himself wrought not only in the authors of the Latin hymns, but also in Luther, who in our time has had the chief part both in writing the German choral hymns, and in setting them to tunes; as may be seen, among others in the German Sanctus (*Jesaia dem Propheten das geschah*) how masterly and well he has fitted all the notes to the text, according to the just accent and concert. At the time, I was moved by His Grace to put the question how or where he had got this composition, or this instruction; whereupon the dear man laughed at my simplicity, and said: I learned this of the poet Virgil, who has the power so artfully to adapt his verses and his words to the story he is telling; in like manner must Music govern all its notes and melodies by the text."<sup>5</sup>

It seems superfluous to add to this testimony the word of Sleidan, the nearly contemporary historian, who says expressly concerning "*Ein' feste Burg*" that Luther made for it a tune singularly suited to the words, and adapted to stir the heart.<sup>6</sup> If ever there were hymn and tune that told their own story of a common and simultaneous origin, without need of confirmation by external evidence, it is these.

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<sup>5</sup> This interesting and characteristic document was printed first in the *Syntaxma Musicum* of Michael Praetorius, many of whose harmonies are to be found in this volume. It has been repeatedly copied since. I take it from Rambach, "Ueber D. Martin Luthers Verdienst um den Kirchengesang, oder Darstellung desjenigen was er als Liturg, als Liederdichter und Tonsetzer zur Verbesserung des öffentlichen Gottesdienstes geleistet hat. Hamburg, 1813."

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Rambach, p. 215.

To an extent quite without parallel in the history of music, the power of Luther's tunes, as well as of his words, is manifest after three centuries, over the masters of the art, as well as over the common people. Peculiarly is this true of the great song *Ein' feste Burg*, which Heine not vainly predicted would again be heard in Europe in like manner as of old. The composers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries practised their elaborate artifices upon it. The supreme genius of Sebastian Bach made it the subject of study.<sup>7</sup> And in our own times it has been used with conspicuous effect in Mendelssohn's Reformation Symphony, in an overture by Raff, in the noble *Festouverture* of Nicolai, and in Wagner's *Kaisermarsch*; and is introduced with recurring emphasis in Meyerbeer's masterpiece of *The Huguenots*.

It is needless to say that the materials of this Birth-day Edition of Luther's Hymns and Tunes have been prepared in profusion by the diligence of German scholars. But very thankful acknowledgments are also due to English translators, who have made this work possible within the very scanty time allotted to it. Full credit is given in the table of contents for the help derived from these various translators. But the exigencies of this volume were peculiarly severe, inasmuch as the translation was to be printed over against the original, and also under the music. Not even Mr. Richard Massie's careful work would always bear this double test; so that I have found myself compelled, in most cases, to give up the attempt to follow any translation exactly; and in some instances have reluctantly attempted a wholly new version. The whole credit of the musical editorship belongs to my accomplished associate, Mr. Nathan H. Allen, without whose ready resource and earnest labor the work would have been impossible within the limits of time necessarily prescribed. In the choice of harmonies for these ancient tunes, he has wisely preferred, in general, the arrangements of the older masters. The critical musician will see, and will not complain, that the original modal structure of the melodies is sometimes affected by the harmonic treatment.

And now the proper conclusion to this Introduction, which, like the rest of the volume, is in so slight a degree the work of the editor, is to add the successive prefaces from the pen of Luther which accompanied successive hymn-books published during his life-time and under his supervision.

*LEONARD WOOLSEY BACON*

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<sup>7</sup> In more than one of his cantatas, especially that for the Reformation's festival.

## Luther's First Preface

To the "*Geystliche Gsangbuechlin, Erstlich zu Wittenberg, und volgend durch Peter schoeffern getruckt, im jar m. d. xxv. Autore Ioanne Walthero.*"

That it is good, and pleasing to God, for us to sing spiritual songs is, I think, a truth whereof no Christian can be ignorant; since not only the example of the prophets and kings of the Old Testament (who praised God with singing and music, poesy and all kind of stringed instruments) but also the like practice of all Christendom from the beginning, especially in respect to psalms, is well known to every one: yea, St. Paul doth also appoint the same (I Cor. xiv.) and command the Colossians, in the third chapter, to sing spiritual songs and psalms from the heart unto the Lord, that thereby the word of God and Christian doctrine be in every way furthered and practiced.

Accordingly, to make a good beginning and to encourage others who can do it better, I have myself, with some others, put together a few hymns, in order to bring into full play the blessed Gospel, which by God's grace hath again risen: that we may boast, as Moses doth in his song (Exodus xv.) that Christ is become our praise and our song, and that, whether we sing or speak, we may not know anything save Christ our Saviour, as St. Paul saith (I Cor. ii).

These songs have been set in four parts, for no other reason than because I wished to provide our young people (who both will and ought to be instructed in music and other sciences) with something whereby they might rid themselves of amorous and carnal songs, and in their stead learn something wholesome, and so apply themselves to what is good with pleasure, as becometh the young.

Beside this, I am not of opinion that all sciences should be beaten down and made to cease by the Gospel, as some fanatics pretend; but I would fain see all the arts, and music in particular, used in the service of Him who hath given and created them.

Therefore I entreat every pious Christian to give a favorable reception to these hymns, and to help forward my undertaking, according as God hath given him more or less ability. The world is, alas, not so mindful and diligent to train and teach our poor youth, but that we ought to be forward in promoting the same. God grant us his grace. Amen.

## Luther's Second Preface

To the Funeral Hymns: *"Christliche Geseng, Lateinisch und Deudsch, zum Begrebnis. Wittemberg, Anno m. d. xlii."*

DR. MARTIN LUTHER TO THE CHRISTIAN READER. St. Paul writes to the Thessalonians, that they should not sorrow for the dead as others who have no hope, but should comfort one another with God's word, as they who have a sure hope of life and of the resurrection of the dead. For that they should sorrow who have no hope is not to be wondered at, nor indeed are they to be blamed for it, since, being shut out from the faith of Christ, they must either regard and love the present life only, and be loth to lose it, or after this life look for everlasting death and the wrath of God in hell, and be unwilling to go thither.

But we Christians who from all this have been redeemed by the precious blood of the Son of God, should exercise and wont ourselves in faith to despise death, to look on it as a deep, sound, sweet sleep, the coffin no other than the bosom of our Lord Christ, or paradise, the grave nought but a soft couch of rest; as indeed it is in the sight of God, as he saith in St. John, xi., "our friend Lazarus sleepeth;" Matthew ix., "the maid is not dead but sleepeth."

In like manner also St. Paul, I Cor. xv., doth put out of sight the unlovely aspect of death in our perishing body, and bring forward nought but the lovely and delightsome view of life, when he saith: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor (that is, in a loathsome and vile form); it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

Accordingly have we, in our churches, abolished, done away, and out-and-out made an end of the popish horrors, such as wakes, masses for the soul, obsequies, purgatory, and all other mummeries for the dead, and will no longer have our churches turned into wailing-places and houses of mourning, but, as the primitive Fathers called them, "Cemeteries," that is, resting and sleeping places.

We sing, withal, beside our dead and over their graves, no dirges nor lamentations, but comforting songs of the forgiveness of sins, of rest, sleep, live and resurrection of the departed believers, for the strengthening of our faith, and the stirring up of the people to a true devotion.

For it is meet and right to give care and honor to the burial of the dead, in a manner worthy of that blessed article of our creed, the resurrection of the dead, and to the spite of that dreadful enemy, death, who doth so shamefully and continually prey upon us, in every horrid way and shape. Accordingly, as we read, the holy patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and the rest, kept their burials with great pomp, and ordered them with much diligence; and afterwards the kings of Judah held splendid ceremonials over the dead, with costly incense of all manner of precious herbs, thereby to hide the offense and shame of death, and acknowledge and glorify the resurrection of the dead, and so to comfort the weak in faith and the sorrowful. In like manner, even down to this present, have Christians ever been wont to do honorably by the bodies and the graves of the dead, decorating them, singing beside them and adorning them with monuments. Of all importance is that doctrine of the resurrection, that we be firmly grounded therein; for it is our lasting, blessed, eternal comfort and joy, against death, hell, the devil and all sorrow of heart. As a good example of what should be used for this end, we have taken the sweet music or melodies which under popish rule are in use at wakes, funerals and masses for the dead, some of which we have printed in this little book; and it is in our thought, as time shall serve, to add others to them, or have this done by more competent hands. But we have set other words thereto, such as shall adorn our doctrine of the resurrection, not that of purgatory with its pains and expiations, whereby the dead may neither sleep nor rest. The notes and melodies are of great price; it were pity to let them perish; but the words to them were unchristian and uncouth, so let these perish.

It is just as in other matters they do greatly excel us, having splendid rites of worship, magnificent convents and abbeys; but the preachings and doctrines heard therein do for the most part serve the devil and dishonor God; who nevertheless is Lord and God over all the earth, and should have of everything the fairest, best and noblest. Likewise have they costly shrines of gold and silver, and images set with gems and jewels; but within are dead men's bones, as foul and corrupt as in any charnel-house. So also have they costly vestments, chasubles, palliums, copes, hoods, mitres, but what are they that be clothed therewithal? slow-bellies, evil wolves, godless swine, persecuting and dishonoring the word of God. Just in the same way have they much noble music, especially in the abbeys and parish churches, used to adorn most vile, idolatrous words. Wherefore we have undressed these idolatrous, lifeless, crazy words, stripping off the noble music, and putting it upon the living and holy word of God, wherewith to sing, praise and honor the same, that so the beautiful ornament of music, brought back to its right use, may serve its blessed Maker and his Christian people; so that he shall be praised and glorified, and that we by his holy word impressed upon the heart with sweet songs, be builded up and confirmed in the faith. Hereunto help us God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Yet is it not our purpose that these precise notes be sung in all the churches. Let each church keep its own notes according to its book and use. For I myself do not listen with pleasure in cases where the notes to a hymn or a *respon-sorium* have been changed, and it is sung amongst us in a different way from what I have been used to from my youth. The main point is the correcting of the words, not of the music.

[Then follow selections of Scripture recommended as suitable for epitaphs.]

## Luther's Third Preface

To the Hymn-book printed at Wittenberg by Joseph Klug, 1543. There are certain who, by their additions to our hymns, have clearly shown that they far excel me in this matter, and may well be called my masters. But some, on the other hand, have added little of value. And inasmuch as I see that there is no limit to this perpetual amending by every one indiscriminately according to his own liking, so that the earliest of our hymns are more perverted the more they are printed, I am fearful that it will fare with this little book as it has ever fared with good books, that through tampering by incompetent hands it may get to be so overlaid and spoiled that the good will be lost out of it, and nothing be kept in use but the worthless.

We see in the first chapter of St. Luke that in the beginning every one wanted to write a gospel, until among the multitude of gospels the true Gospel was well-nigh lost. So has it been with the works of St. Jerome and St. Augustine, and with many other books. In short, there will always be tares sown among the wheat.

In order as far as may be to avoid this evil, I have once more revised this book, and put our own hymns in order by themselves with name attached, which formerly I would not do for reputation's sake, but am now constrained to do by necessity, lest strange and unsuitable songs come to be sold under our name. After these, are arranged the others, such as we deem good and useful.

I beg and beseech all who prize God's pure word that henceforth without our knowledge and consent no further additions or alterations be made in this book of ours; and that when it is amended without our knowledge, it be fully understood to be not our book published at Wittenberg. Every man can for himself make his own hymn-book, and leave this of ours alone without additions; as we here beg, beseech and testify. For we like to keep our coin up to our own standard, debarring no man from making better for himself. Now let God's name alone be praised, and our name not sought. Amen.

## Luther's Fourth Preface

To Valentine Bapst's Hymn-book, Leipzig, 1545. The xcvi Psalm saith: "Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth." The service of God in the old dispensation, under the law of Moses, was hard and wearisome. Many and divers sacrifices had men to offer, of all that they possessed, both in house and in field, which the people, being idle and covetous, did grudgingly or for some temporal advantage; as the prophet Malachi saith, chap. i., "who is there even among you that would shut the doors for naught? neither do ye kindle fires on my altars for naught." But where there is such an idle and grudging heart there can be no singing, or at least no singing of any good. Cheerful and merry must we be in heart and mind, when we would sing. Therefore hath God suffered such idle and grudging service to perish, as he saith further: "I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand: for from the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered in my name and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts."

So that now in the New Testament there is a better service, whereof the psalm speaketh: "Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord all the earth." For God hath made our heart and mind joyful through his dear Son whom he hath given for us to redeem us from sin, death and the devil. Who earnestly believes this cannot but sing and speak thereof with joy and delight, that others also may hear and come. But whoso will not speak and sing thereof, it is a sign that he doth not believe it, and doth not belong to the cheerful New Testament but to the dull and joyless Old Testament.

Therefore it is well done on the part of the printers that they are diligent to print good hymns, and make them agreeable to the people with all sorts of embellishments, that they may be won to this joy in believing and gladly sing of it. And inasmuch as this edition of Valtin Bapst [Pope] is prepared in fine style, God grant that it may bring great hurt and damage to that Roman *Bapst* who by his accursed, intolerable and abominable ordinances has brought nothing into the world but wailing, mourning and misery. Amen. I must give notice that the song which is sung at funerals,

"Nun lasst uns den Leib begraben,"

which bears my name is not mine, and my name is henceforth not to stand with it. Not that I reject it, for I like it very much, and it was made by a good poet, Johannes Weis<sup>8</sup> by name, only a little visionary about the Sacrament; but I will not appropriate to myself another man's work. Also in the *De Profundis*, read thus:

Des muss *dich* fuerchten jedermann.

Either by mistake or of purpose this is printed in most books

Des muss *sich* fuerchten jedermann.

*Ut timearis*. The Hebrew reading is as in Matthew xv.: "In vain do they fear me teaching doctrines of men." See also Psalms xiv. and liii.: "They call not on the Lord; there feared they where no fear was." That is, they may have much show of humiliation and bowing and bending in worship where I will have no worship. Accordingly this is the meaning in the place: Since forgiveness of sins is nowhere else to be found but only with thee, so must they let go all idolatry, and come with a willing heart bowing and bending before thee, creeping up to the cross, and have thee alone in honor, and take refuge in thee, and serve thee, as living by thy grace and not by their own righteousness, etc.

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<sup>8</sup> Luther's mistake for *Michael Weyssse*, author of a Moravian hymn-book of 1531.

## A Preface to All Good Hymn-Books

By Dr. Martin Luther

From Joseph Klug's Hymn-Book, Wittenberg, 1543.

### Lady Musick Speaketh

Of all the joys that are on earth  
Is none more dear nor higher worth,  
Than what in my sweet songs is found  
And instruments of various sound.

Where friends and comrades sing in tune,  
All evil passions vanish soon;  
Hate, anger, envy, cannot stay,  
All gloom and heartache melt away;  
The lust of wealth, the cares that cling,  
Are all forgotten while we sing.

Freely we take our joy herein,  
For this sweet pleasure is no sin,  
But pleaseth God far more, we know,  
Than any joys the world can show;  
The Devil's work it doth impede,  
And hinders many a deadly deed.

Se fared it with King Saul of old;  
When David struck his harp of gold,  
So sweet and clear its tones rang out,  
Saul's murderous thoughts were put to rout.

The heart grows still when I am heard,  
And opens to God's Truth and Word;  
So are we by Elisha taught,  
Who on the harp the Spirit sought.

The best time of the year is mine,  
When all the little birds combine  
To sing until the earth and air  
Are filled with sweet sounds everywhere;  
And most the tender nightingale  
Makes joyful every wood and dale,  
Singing her love-song o'er and o'er,  
For which we thank her evermore.

But yet more thanks are due from us  
To the dear Lord who made her thus,  
A singer apt to touch the heart,  
Mistress of all my dearest art.  
To God she sings by night and day,  
Unwearied, praising Him alway;  
Him I, too, laud in every song,  
To whom all thanks and praise belong.

*Translation by CATHARINE WINKWORTH.*

### **A Warning by Dr. Martin Luther**

Viel falscher Meister itzt Lieder tichten  
Sihe dich fuer und lern sie recht richten  
Wo Gott hin bawet sein Kirch und sein wort  
Da will der Cenfel sein mit trug und mord.

*Wittenberg, 1543; Leipzig, 1545*

False masters now abound, who songs indite;  
Beware of them, and learn to judge them right:  
Where God builds up his Church and Word, hard by  
Satan is found with murder and a lie.

*Translation by R. MASSIE*

# **I. Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g'mein**

**Dear Christians, one and all rejoice**

## **A Song of Thanksgiving for the great Benefits which God in Christ has manifested to us**

FIRST MELODY, *Wittenberg*, 1524. *Harmony by* H. SCHEIN, 1627.

SECOND MELODY, *Wittenberg*, 1535. *Harmony by* M. PRAETORIUS, 1610.

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

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

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

4. God saw, in his eternal grace,  
My sorrow out of measure;  
He thought upon his tenderness-  
To save was his good pleasure.  
He turn'd to me a Father's heart-  
Not small the cost – to heal my smart  
He have his best and dearest.

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

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