

CFBC Hymnology Class 7 German Hymnody in the 1600s- Part 2

Joachim Neander (1650-1680)

Background...

“In the later 17th century a new force arose among the Lutherans known as Pietism which reacted to a perceived lack of spirituality in the Lutheran Church after it became the state religion in many northern German states. It had a great influence upon the hymns written during that period. The greatest Pietistic hymnwriter was Joachim Neander, son of a minister who became a Lutheran and wrote around 60 hymns before he died at the age of 30. His most famous, 'Lobe den Herren, den machtigen Konig' of 1680, was translated into English by Catherine Winkworth in 1863 as "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty.”

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

The Wild Hymn Writer

The year was 1670. The Pietist movement was sweeping fast across the Protestant areas of Germany. Many sermons placed an emphasis on *personal religion*. And at St. Martin's church in Bremen, it was no different.

Using 1 Peter 1 as a basis of his sermon, the preacher gave a powerful call to a real spiritual rebirth, a true inward holiness.

In the midst of the congregation, a young man listened, dumbfounded and abashed. He and his friend came to church with every intention to make a joke out of the whole sermon. But as he listened, the discourse turned out to be nothing like he heard before. New, not really. But it was definitely straight, heartfelt and earnest.

The preacher...Theodore Undereyk, a pioneer of pietism in the German Reformed Church. The wild 20-year old young man...Joachim Neander, the hymn writer for the famous hymn, “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty.”

But, let's not get ahead of ourselves here.



Joachim Neander's father, a Latin teacher, died when he was a teenager. This left the family bereft of a strong financial source, forcing Neander to choose a local school instead of going to one of the famous German universities.

In the school, Neander signed up to be a theology student. But his heart just was not in it. As a student, he led an immoral and lusty life. Ironically, it was not long after he gained a reputation for having a wild lifestyle.

His contemporaries wrote that *"his student life was spent in vanity of the mind, forgetfulness of God, and the eager pursuit of youthful pleasures."*

And so as the story goes one fine Sunday, he and two of his friends went to church not to worship, but to make a spectacle out of it. But as Neander sat and listened to the sermon, a strange conviction came to his heart and he was never the same.

Another incident that solidified this conviction was during a hunting game. He had wandered far into a steep and rocky hillside and realized that he was completely lost and in physical danger if he tried to make his way in the dark. Sensing the urgency of the situation, he prayed that if God would lead him to safety, then his future life would be dedicated to God's service.

And we could all guess how God answered that prayer, because Joachim Neander turned out to be one of the finest hymn writers, not only for the Pietist movement, but for the Protestant church as a whole.

Well after his conversion experience, he got a job as a director of the Latin School in Dusseldorf. It was somehow a stressful experience for him because of the strong opposition against Pietism.

To detox himself from such a difficult situation, he would take long walks. Seeing the nature around him would seem to refresh his mind, inspiring him to write hymns. In fact, most of his hymns (he wrote 60) were written during his stint at Dusseldorf.

One spot that attracted him was in a valley near Dussel river. He would go there to hold worship services, to relax, and of course, to write hymns. He spent so much time in that area that the locals started calling it Neander Valley.

He died too young...Ten years after his conversion experience, Neander was seized with a sudden and violent bout of tuberculosis. An incurable disease at that time, he expected his death to be imminent.

Yet through his suffering, Neander's mind was stayed on God.

Through sore coughs, witnesses at his bedside still heard him say,
"Rather will I hope on, even unto death, than be lost through unbelief."

Through a thunderstorm, he cried, *"I hear my Father's voice; would that it were his chariot-wheels, coming for me!"*

When given food to eat, he exclaimed, *"It is not only 'taste,' but 'taste and see that the Lord is good;' though I cannot taste this food, I can see it."*

Finally, on May 31st when the signs of death were unmistakable, the physician asked how he felt, he replied, "Now the Lord has made out my reckoning." And then quoting from Isaiah 54:10, he says, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee..." Soon afterwards, he gently fell asleep. He was 30 years of age.

While the composer of the tune for Praise to the Lord is unknown, its tune name was called LOBE DEN HERREN, adapting the original German lyrics that Joachim Neander wrote. In the meantime, All My Hope on God is Founded was given a tune (MICHAEL) by Herbert Howells, a well-known English composer. We are also indebted to Catherine Winkworth who did an amazing job translating these German verses to English. Without her, we would have not truly enjoyed the merits of these beautiful verses.

Who would've thought that a wild and carefree man would pen such great hymns? Thanks to the power of the Holy Spirit who can convict men of sin that they "...may also do good, ye that are accustomed to do evil." (Jer. 13:23)

<https://hymnsforworship.org/joachim-neander-wild-hymn-writer/>

“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”...The Story Behind the Hymn

Joachim Neander was born in Bremen, the son of a Latin teacher. His grandfather had changed their surname from Neumann (new man, in English) to the Greek Neander, following a fashion of the time. After the death of his father he couldn't afford to study at a prestigious university, and therefore studied theology in his hometown between the years 1666 and 1670. We understand that at first his heart wasn't really in it. It was only when he heard a sermon by a man by the name of Theodore Undereyk shortly before the end of his studies that his beliefs became serious.

In 1671, he became a private tutor in Heidelberg, and three years later, in 1674, he became a Latin teacher in a school in Dusseldorf, one step before becoming a minister. He actually only became a minister the year before he died. He was in the ministry just for one year, and contracted tuberculosis, which was very common then, and died at the young age of 30.

Stanza two of this hymn opens gladly and unapologetically acknowledging God as sovereign over all things...this is a German Reformed hymn writer at twenty years old writing this song. There are beautiful images of God's protective care over us in stanza two: “He shelters thee under His wings...He gently sustains us.”

Notice how the song asks you to talk to yourselves: “He shelters *you*...” Who's the *you*? It's you! You're talking to yourself! He's sheltering you, *you* being you, talking to your own soul. It reminds you of Martyn Lloyd-Jones' suggestion that Christians ought not to talk to themselves, but they ought to argue and preach to themselves! So that we're deliberately exhorting ourselves to believe the words of Scripture and what they say about God. The second stanza concludes with a beautiful reminder that God has often granted our hearts' desires in His providential unfolding of His plan in our lives.

Stanza three is beautiful. It speaks of the Lord prospering the work of our hands. It reminds you of Psalm 90:17. It not only echoes Psalm 103 and Psalm 150, but you find echoes of all sorts of Scripture throughout the text of this song. There are echoes of Deuteronomy in “...shelters thee under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth”.

And even of Lamentations 3:22, 23 in the phrase “...His goodness and mercy here daily attend thee”. You can almost hear “His mercies are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness” out of Lamentations 3. This is an element of great hymn writing, that it draws on the language and thought of Scripture everywhere.

Stanza four acknowledges that God is our Maker, the giver of our health, the loving providential guide and support of our life.

Its powerful language crescendos with this bold and believing declaration: “How oft in grief hath not He brought thee relief, spreading His wings to o’er shade thee?”

I love to look at our congregation when we’re singing this song, because I’ve seen so many saints sing through tears of trust, in bonds of suffering, in confident peace as they’ve sung that line.

Then the song ends with this beautiful stanza five, once more asking us to give God all our praise: “O let all that is in me adore Him!” And then it transitions to the words and exhortations of Psalm 150:6 ... “All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him.” Concluding with the call to God’s people to add their “so be it,” their “amen” to the praise and to continue this happy adoration forever.”

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http://fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/Radio%20Programs/Hymns_of_the_Faith/HOF_Vol_1/01a_praise_to_the_lord_the_almighty.htm

Some hymnals entitle this hymn *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty*. The English translation of Neander’s hymn was made by Catherine Winkworth. The tune name, *Lobe den Herren* is simply the first words of the German hymn, meaning “Praise the Lord!”

The original hymn had five stanzas (Stanzas 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7). It is believed the other two excellent stanzas (Stanzas 5 and 6) may be the work of Percy Dearmer, former canon of Westminster Abbey, who wrote and translated many hymns. The great hymn historian John Julian calls it “a magnificent hymn of praise to God, perhaps the finest production of its author, and of the first rank in its class.”

This great hymn of resounding praise alludes to (or draws inspiration from) many passages of Scripture, including Psalms 103 and 150. The God we praise is King (or Ruler) over all He has made (Ps. 24:1-2; 47:2; 97:1; 103:19). He is the Source of our health (Ps. 103:3) and “salvation.” The latter may be thought of in terms of our eternal salvation, but it also includes temporal deliverance from harm.

That theme is taken up in Stanza 2, which reflects Psalm 37:4, “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.”

Praise to the Lord, who over all things so wondrously reigneth,
Shelters thee under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth!
Hast thou not seen how thy desires e’er hath been
Granted in what He ordaineth?

Says David, “I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14). And that thought opens Stanza 3 of Joachim Neader’s song.

In Stanza 4 we’re reminded it is also God who “prosper thy work” (Ps. 1:2-3), attending our lives with “goodness and mercy” (Ps. 23:6). Oh, let us each “Ponder anew what the Almighty can do, If with His love He befriend thee”!

Stanzas 5 and 6 were not apparently from Neader’s pen. But they are so good I want to include them.

The first praises the Lord for His protection in times of danger. The second assures us of God’s care in the face of oppression and persecution...

Praise to the Lord, who, when tempests their warfare are waging,
Who, when the elements madly around thee are raging,
Biddeth them cease, turneth their fury to peace,
Whirlwinds and waters assuaging.

Praise to the Lord, who, when darkness of sin is abounding,
Who, when the godless do triumph, all virtue confounding,
Sheddeth His light, chaseth the horrors of night,
Saints with His mercy surrounding.

And how can such a marvelous hymn of praise be concluded? Surely by the singer(s) pledging to praise the Lord wholeheartedly, and by calling on all living things to bring honour and glory to God.

Neader concludes where Psalm 150 does: “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord! (Ps. 150:6). And “Blessed be the LORD God of Israel From everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, ‘Amen! [So be it!]” (Ps. 106:48).

Praise to the Lord, O let all that is in me adore Him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him.
Let the Amen sound from His people again,
Gladly for aye we adore Him.

53: Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

1 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!

O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and salvation!

All ye who hear,

Now to his temple draw near,

Join me in glad adoration.

***2 Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,
Shelters thee under his wings, yea, so gently sustaineth!***

Hast thou not seen

How thy desires e'er have been

Granted in what he ordaineth?

3 Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee!

Surely his goodness and mercy here daily attend thee;

Ponder anew

What the Almighty will do,

If with his love he befriend thee!

***4 Praise to the Lord, who with marvelous wisdom hath made thee,
Decked thee with health, and with loving hand guided and stayed
thee.***

How oft in grief

Hath not he brought thee relief,

Spreading his wings to o'ershade thee!

5 Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!

All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before him.

Let the Amen

Sound from his people again;

Gladly fore'er we adore him.

Author: Joachim Neander (1680)

Translator: Catherine Winkworth (1863; alt. 1990)

Scripture: Psalm 103

Samuel Rodigast (1649-1708)...German Teacher and son of a Lutheran Pastor

“Whate'er My God Ordains Is Right” ...The Story behind the hymn

Samuel Rodigast was a seventeenth century hymn writer, a German born in 1649.

That places him just a few years after the Westminster Assembly that brought

about The Westminster Confession of Faith and Shorter Catechisms in England.

He was born in Groben in Germany, and was a pastor there. And later, in 1680, became a teacher at the Greyfriars Gymnasium at Berlin. This particular hymn first appeared in a hymnbook in 1676, and written it seems for the composer of the tune, who was sick, Severus Gastorius.

Even as Rodigast is writing this for a friend, and thus as an encouragement and exhortation for him, there's preaching to ourselves... "whate'er my God ordains is right." You don't even sit down to write that without knowing the experience of having to preach that to yourself, because you know that even if you do believe that—and we do believe that fervently—we also know that there are circumstances in our lives where we have had to preach that to ourselves.

Every opportunity that you have to sing this hymn, you have a chance to preach to yourself again. That makes those antiphonal parts of it, I think, even more special. So throughout the hymn the text gives you this kind of "preaching to yourself" response to God's truth...focus on who God is and what He does, respond to it, and rest in it.

Derek Thomas, First Presbyterian Church of Jackson, MS

The text was written by a German teacher, Samuel Rodigast, in order to encourage a very sick friend. No doubt it did, and has continued to encourage God's people ever since.

All of us face trying circumstances, and this song reminds us that these things are from the hand of God. This biblical truth is perhaps seen most poignantly in Job chapter 1, where Job attributes his recent tragedies to the hand of God ("the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away"), and Scripture affirms his statement by noting that "In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong" (Job 1:21-22)

But Rodigast does more than baldly acknowledge that all things come from God's hand. That much could be done by a bitter and angry man hurling invective heavenward after a loved one dies or he loses something precious to him. This text, however, points out again and again that God's sovereign hand brings about what is *right*: "Whate'er my God ordains is right." And in the midst of the difficult things that God himself brings into our lives, God himself is helping us (e.g., "He holds me that I shall not fall"), and we can look forward to the day when all suffering will be over (e.g., "Patiently I wait his day").

<https://religiousaffections.org/articles/hymnody/samuel-rodigast-whateer-god/>

How God Gave Me Song Lyrics From 1676

September 6, 2016 by Mark Altrogge

The year was 1676...100 years before the Declaration of Independence

German composer Samuel Rodigast composed a hymn, “Whatever My God Ordains is Right,” to encourage a friend who was suffering. Almost 200 years later, in 1863, Catherine Winkworth translated the hymn into English.

Fast forward to 2007. My daughter, who had suffered with migraines for 7 years found herself 250 miles from home shooting photos at a friend’s wedding. The past couple years had been painful for her in many ways – a good friend had lost her 2-year old daughter to cancer and another friend’s car accident left him in a coma.

Sunday morning she attended a local church and heard a message on – surprise – God’s sovereignty in suffering. In his message, the pastor quoted a hymn, “Whatever My God Ordains is Right”. Beth brought the lyrics home to me, asking, “Dad, can you try put music to these words?” I wrote a melody and tweaked the lyrics a bit and the song was recorded and published by Sovereign Grace Music. Since then, a number of people have told me how much the lyrics have comforted them. Little did Samuel Rodigast suspect in 1676 that his lyrics would comfort my daughter and many others over 300 years later. God’s providence never ceases to amaze me.

108: Whate'er My God Ordains Is Right

1 *Whate'er my God ordains is right:*

Holy his will abideth;
I will be still whate'er he doth;
And follow where he guideth:
He is my God: ***though dark my road,
He holds me that I shall not fall:
Wherefore to him I leave it all.***

2 *Whate'er my God ordains is right:*

He never will deceive me;
He leads me by the proper path;
***I know he will not leave me:
I take, content, what he hath sent;***
His hand can turn my griefs away,
And patiently I wait his day.

3 *Whate'er my God ordains is right:*

Though now this cup, in drinking,
May bitter seem to my faint heart,
I take it, all unshrinking:

***My God is true; each morn anew
Sweet comfort yet shall fill my heart,
And pain and sorrow shall depart.***

4 *Whate'er my God ordains is right:*

***Here shall my stand be taken;
Though sorrow, need, or death be mine,
Yet am I not forsaken;
My Father's care is round me there;
He holds me that I shall not fall:
And so to him I leave it all.***

Author: Samuel Rodigast, 1649-1708 (1675)

Translator: Catherine Winkworth (1863; Alt. 1961)

Meter: 8.7.8.7.4.5.8.8.

Scripture: Genesis 18:25