Chapter 2

Martin Luther

Raising Up the Reformation Song

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Arguably the single most recognized figure of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther contributed much to the shaping of this movement, which altered the face of the Western Church. Luther's life and context prepared him to become a great product of what the church at the beginning of the sixteenth century had become. It also, however, primed him, with his heartfelt conviction of the faith and his way with words, to be aptly suited to rise up as a leader, amidst the fray of the political and ecclesial tensions abounding in the Holy Roman Empire at the time. Throughout his entire adult life, Luther used these skills tirelessly to build up the faith of Christians. The written legacy of his preaching and teaching has fueled the tradition that bears his name for the past 500 years.

On November 10, 1483, in Eisleben, Germany, Hans and Margarete Luder welcomed their son into the world. On November 11, the feast day of St. Martin of Tours, from whom he got his name—as was the practice of the day, Hans took his one-day-old child, accompanied by a number of friends and soon-to-be Godparents, and walked a couple hundred feet up the street

to St. Peter's church for him to receive the sacrament of holy baptism. This day was an ever-important one in the mind of Martin the future theologian, as the reality of his having been baptized gave him comfort and strength in the years to follow. The Luder family moved soon thereafter to nearby Mansfeld, and it was there that Martin entered school at the age of seven. While Martin indicated that he came from humble beginnings, Hans Luder was already proving himself to be an industrious and success-oriented man. Hans was a miner and subsequently a mining prospector, which meant he took a financial risk to set up a copper mining location including processing the ore on site. This mindset to rise up the social ladder was certainly a part of Hans Luder's desire to see young Martin receive the best education possible. After about six years in Mansfeld with a typically classical grammar school education of the time in Latin and comprised of classes in writing, rhetoric, and critical thinking, it was decided that Martin should move on. He was first sent to the cathedral school in the city of Magdeburg and one year later on to Eisenach, which is where his mother was from and where he had relatives, in order to prepare for university studies in a school led by Franciscans. His time in Eisenach was not only a continuation of his classical education, but it was there that Luther received education in music and poetry where he learned to play the lute and was exposed to other instruments, as well. In addition to that, he supported himself as many young pupils of his day did as a *Kurrende-Sänger* (trans. walking singer). Pupils would walk around in little groups from door to door singing for money or food or drink. This educational experience laid some of the essential groundwork for the hymn writer of later years.

In 1501, Martin began his studies in Erfurt, which were comprised of a classical education in the "free arts" taught in Latin including grammar, rhetoric, logic, and mathematics, arithmetic, music, and astronomy. The thoughts of great authors like Aristotle and Virgil were key inspirations in his education, and the University of Erfurt was known in that day as a more modern university. During this time, while recovering from a near fatal accident caused by his own knife, he used the opportunity to spend more time with his music by playing the lute. Martin completed this foundational degree of *Magister Artium* in 1505 and now had the prerequisites in hand in order to study one of the three main university disciplines of medicine, theology, or law. It was decided by Hans Luder that Martin would study the law, a choice that increased his chances to move upward in society and a definite investment in the Luder family's future security. Much to his parents' chagrin, however, Martin had other plans. In July of 1505, he was summoned home to Mansfeld to talk over his future prospects of studying or being given into marriage and on his return journey found himself in the

middle of a terrible thunderstorm near the town of Stotternheim, the likes of which drove him to promise to St. Anne, "help me, St. Anne, and I will become a monk." The terrifying experience of one storm provided enough momentum for Martin to break away from the other storm of his life and his situation with his parents and retreat to the sanctuary of monastic life. Leaving his friends behind at the gate, Martin entered the monastery on July 16, 1505, first as a guest and then after some months of a trial period, for good. The Augustinian hermits, a strict reform branch of the Augustinians, were now his family. The next phase of his formation had begun.

Martin's new life in the Augustinian Monastery in Erfurt, not far from where he had spent the last four years as a student, was regimented and arduous. Hard work in the monastery, begging for alms in the city, time for study, and naturally seven prayer offices a day left little time for sleep. During his time early on, Martin was granted use of a Bible and encouraged to read it, which he did thoroughly from cover to cover, apparently committing much to memory. He took his life as a monk extremely seriously and strived his best to be the best monk he could be. Martin's own retrospection much later in life casts doubt on what a positive experience this time was for him. He was diligent and industrious. Martin found spiritual respite within the walls of the monastery, the work and prayer life, and the Bible. Martin learned the benefits of structure from the practice of the tradition and the joys of freedom gained in his growing faith in Christ as he discovered through his deep and long excursions in the Holy Scriptures. In 1507, Martin was consecrated a priest in a private ceremony in St. Kilian's chapel connected to the cathedral of Erfurt and a month later celebrated his first mass on May 2. This was a very public affair that was marked by anxiety and relief. Martin was terrified of mishandling something so holy and significant and required the physical support of the prior to see things through. Martin's father was there with a large party to witness the event and even donated money for the celebrations. It was a turning point in their relationship. Martin showed his father and God that he could do this and do this well.

Life continued for Martin among the Augustinian hermits. His status as a priest and his scholarly abilities opened up avenues for him to teach Bible and theology both in Erfurt and then in Wittenberg, where Martin moved in 1508 for further studies and to fulfill his assignment to teach at the newly established university there. In 1511–12, he was sent to Rome for a meeting on behalf of the Augustinian order. While in Rome, Martin saw the greatness of the Renaissance and the depravity of an institution that had, in many ways, become quite corrupt. He was saddened by the terrible state of the structure of St. Peter's in Rome. An assembly line practice of the

faith including the rampant sale of indulgences along with other unsavory practices was in direct contrast to the rich history and tradition of the faith that he saw all around him. This experience was grist for the mill of Martin's future theological convictions and fuel for the fire of his desire to reform a church he dearly loved.

Upon returning to Wittenberg, Martin Luder's career continued to soar. In 1512, he took over Staupitz's professorship and was given many other responsibilities by him within the order, as well. It is fitting to note within the context of this volume that Martin's early lectures concentrated on Psalms, the song book of the Bible. Martin knew them intimately, since as a monk, if one prays all seven offices each day in a week, one will have sung through all 150 psalms, some of them more than once. Studying these "hymns" of the faith in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and of course German, Martin continued to hone his sensibilities of a sung living faith as he found it in ancient Scripture. During this time, Martin also continued to develop his theology influenced by the church father, after which his order was named, St. Augustine. Augustine, the German mystical theology of Johannes Tauler, and the influence and interpretations of Staupitz all guided Martin's development. The years leading up to 1517 and beyond show a constantly developing thought that continued more and more to lift up the notion of the comfort to be found in faith in a forgiving, self-sacrificing Jesus Christ. This became more and more foundational to his theological filter: the good news of freedom found through faith in Christ. The year 1517 is generally seen as a marker for the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. This moment of "posting" the 95 Theses on the practice of the sale of indulgences has taken on mythical proportions.[1] The reality of a reforming movement is much more multifaceted, covers a longer period of time, and is comprised of many various steps along the way. In 1517, Martin Luder also decided to adopt the common practice among academics and adapt his name to Greek or Latin. Being the wordsmith that he was and playing off of his last name, Martin chose *elutherios/elutherius* (meaning the liberated one). That only held for a while and Martin decided to drop the pretense of a full Greek/Latin name but held on to the 'th' from *elutherios*. The young Professor Luther, along with his colleagues on the Wittenberg faculty, continued to teach, preach, and write. With the help of the advent of the printing industry, the teachings coming out of this young upstart university in Wittenberg, championed by the young Augustinian friar/priest, were gaining traction, and in some corners of Europe even notoriety. The tension, however, between Martin

1. For a thorough treatment of the discussion of the veracity of the posting the 95 Theses see, Leppin and Wengert, "Sources for and Against."

Luther and Rome over the sale of indulgences and over Luther's general critique of the scholastic theology of the day increased exponentially, and the situation eventually came to a head in June 1520. At this point, Rome had had enough with Luther, and Pope Leo X issued the papal bull *Exsurge Domine* (trans. Arise, O Lord), which gave him sixty days to recant the listed citations of his work or else be excommunicated. Luther's response was to publicly burn this letter from the pope, sealing his opposition to a blind acceptance of the authority of the church.

Amidst growing pressure, Elector Frederick the Wise, Luther's constant protector from above, was able to stave off a final decision by convincing the Emperor Charles V to wait until hearing out the case at the Imperial Diet of Worms in April of 1521. It was here that Luther made his final stand and refused in good conscience, unless otherwise convinced by Scripture or reason, to recant his writings. This left the emperor with no choice but to declare Luther's life forfeit and issue an imperial ban. Luther went into protective exile to the Wartburg Castle in Eisenach. During this time, he stayed in contact with Wittenberg primarily through letters, and translated the New Testament into German. After hearing that his colleague Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt was leading Wittenberg to a more radical reformation including iconoclasm in the churches in his absence, Luther decided to return to Wittenberg to take up the mantle of a teaching leader of the Reformation based in Wittenberg. Beginning with his famous Invocavit sermons of March 1522, Luther set out on a path of moderate reform. At this same time, other more radical voices in Germany, like that of Thomas Müntzer, were gaining popularity for their moves to make worship more relevant. Müntzer's attempts at translating the mass and many Gregorian chorales into German were met with initial success. Luther was forced to take on the central task of becoming a practical theologian—that is, a theologian who attended to the "practical" pastoral concerns, including worship. Now was the chance for Luther's musical and poetic education to find an expression.

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Luther had been honing his biblical, academic theology for years. Luther's own rediscovery of God's free grace in the person of Jesus Christ and his life, death, and resurrection shaped his theology and filled his writings. The prospects of causing a positive reforming effect as a part of the Roman church, however, were dwindling rapidly. The pope had excommunicated him, he had "excommunicated" the pope in response; the emperor had

banned him, and now Luther was left to forge the way constructively and not just critically. His own colleague, Karlstadt, had left his scars on Wittenberg and Luther was now called upon to be a practical theologian with the task of providing a new reforming voice for the worshiping church. In response to the extreme actions of Karlstadt and others, Luther offered his understandings of how to engage in liturgical reform in the first half of 1523 with the pamphlet *Concerning an Order of Public Worship*.[2] Orderly reform was now beginning to take shape. Little did Luther know at that point what was soon in store. The reformer's own poetic voice was called into service just months after things started to settle in Wittenberg, and the first cry from this voice was a tribute to the first martyrs of the cause. On July 1, 1523, two monastic brothers from Luther's Augustinian order from the cloister in Antwerp were burned at the stake on the market square in Brussels for their treasonous heresy of confessing Luther's teachings. In Luther's mind, this should have been him rather than two of his adherents. "The personal and emotional shock and the desire to use the [tragic] events for Reformation propaganda"[3] led Luther to respond by picking up his pen and setting it to paper. It was popular at the time to write inspirational tributes in the forms of ballad for interesting figures seen as heroes or for saints and martyrs. This was certainly the case for Luther's very first foray as a hymn writer, *Ein neues Lied heben wir an* (Flung to the heedless winds).[4]

Ein neues Lied heben wir an is a ballad-battle cry for two martyrs of the church. Perhaps he was even experiencing some guilt over the fact that others were dying for this cause he led while he was safe and protected in Wittenberg. In a letter "to the Christians in the Netherlands" that accompanied the publication of this first hymn, Luther's sense of "survivor's guilt" can be discerned: "We up here in Germany have not yet been sufficiently deserving to become so precious and worthy an offering to Christ, though many of our members have not been, and still are not, without persecution."[5] Guilt or no guilt, the attribution of worthiness was Luther's way of shifting the meaning of their death from heretic to that of martyr. Tertullian's second century saying, "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church," was taken up

2. Luther, *Luther's Works,* 53:7–9.

3. Jenny, *Luther, Zwingli, Calvin*, 15.

4. Because hymns in translation often create confusion, this brief introduction will refer to Luther's hymns in their original German followed, at first mention, by one of the translated titles used in English-language hymnals in parentheses. For a thorough chart to aid in identifying the location of English translations of German hymns see Robin A. Leaver's recent work on congregational singing in Wittenberg in Luther's time. Leaver, *Whole Church Sings*, 173–77.

5. Luther, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 193.

by Luther in the form of song. Their memory and their story of faith would be printed, disseminated, and sung throughout Germany among those no longer interested in the oppression of Roman Catholic doctrine and rule. Luther wrote hundreds of thousands of words and preached thousands of sermons in Wittenberg alone. All of this theology and expression of the Christian faith, while certainly effective, now had a new conduit. And the opportunity to turn passive hearers into active singing theologians was not lost on the theology professor and priest-preacher from Wittenberg. Luther turned his energies to the task of empowering the faithful with words and music they themselves could sing.

By the end of the year, Luther turned his attention back toward addressing positively what changes could and should be undertaken regarding the Latin mass. This led to the publication of *An Order of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg* in 1523.[6] In this guidebook of sorts, Luther made various suggestions of what to keep and what could be done away with in the liturgy. Toward the end of this writing, Luther also made known his thoughts concerning congregational singing:

> I also wish that we had as many songs as possible in the vernacular which the people could sing during mass, immediately after the gradual and also after the Sanctus and Agnus Dei. For who doubts that originally all the people sang these which now only the choir sings or responds to while the bishop is consecrating? The bishops may have these [congregational] hymns sung either after the Latin chants, or use the Latin on one[Sun] day and the vernacular on the next, until the time comes that the whole mass is sung in the vernacular. But poets are wanting among us, or not yet known, who could compose evangelical and spiritual songs, as Paul calls them [Col. 3:16], worth to be used in the church of God. . . . I mention this to encourage any German poets to compose evangelical hymns for us.[7]

In a letter to George Spalatin, at the end of 1523, we read how Luther asks for help in this task and we are given a glimpse of Luther's vision of how to write texts for congregational singing:

> I would like you to avoid any new words or the language used at court. In order to be understood by the people, only the simplest and most common words should be used for singing; at the same time, however, they should be pure and apt; and further, the sense should be as clear and as close as possible to the psalm.

6. Luther, *Luther's Works,* 53:10–21.
7. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 53:19.

> You need a free hand here: maintain the sense, but don't cling to the words; [rather] translate them with other appropriate words.[8]

The name of this theory or method of translation is known today as *dynamic equivalence*, and it was a guiding principle of Luther's that led him throughout his translations of the Old and New Testaments to find ways to bring passages of Scripture to life using imaginative and inventive language, which ended up codifying and in some cases even creating what has become modern German. He employed this skill in his hymn writing, as well. And he desired it of all those that he could win for the task of creating a sing-able faith for the people of God.

There were other German poets, but Luther's desire to provide the faithful with words and music for their voice of faith encouraged him to continue and he began composing hymns based on the psalms as some of his earliest work. He knew the psalms well and regarded them highly. What better place to continue his new mission than with these gems from Hebrew Scriptures. Around the beginning of 1524, Luther wrote rhyming translations of identical meter of four psalms: Ps 12, *Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein* (O Lord, look down from heaven behold); Ps 14, *Es spricht der unweisen Mund wohl* (The mouth of fools doth God confess); Ps 124, *War Gott nicht mit uns diese Zeit* (If God had not been on our side); and Ps 130, *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir* (Out of the depths I cry to you). The standard meter used by Luther in these four hymns, sometimes referred to as a *Lutherstrophe*, allowed for flexibility of marrying accompanying tunes to the various texts as needed. These were set to a number of suitable tunes, and already in early collections there is a tradition of certain melodies being assigned to certain texts. The last of these four, *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir*, with its remarkable melody in the Phyrigian mode ascribed to Luther himself, is certainly one of Luther's better known and often musically cited melodies. In addition to these four psalm hymns, Luther also wrote metrical versions of the following psalms: 128, *Wohl dem, der in Gottesfurcht steht* (Happy the man who feareth God); 67, *Es woll uns Gott genädig sein* (May God bestow on us his grace); and 46, *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott* (A mighty fortress is our God). The last one listed has become, in many respects, the banner hymn of the Reformation, Lutheran and beyond. Just as the faithful throughout time have called upon God to protect them from whatever evil abounds, this hymn of Luther's gives praise to God's protection and names Jesus Christ as the hero, who comes to set us free from sin and the powers of the devil.

8. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 49:69.

The year 1524 saw the advent of the first hymnals among "Lutheran"[9] circles. The very first "Lutheran" hymnal, the *Achtliederbuch* (Book of Eight Songs), was published in Nürnberg, a significant city of the Reformation and Reformation printing. Four of the eight hymns were from Luther's hand, three of them from the aforementioned collection: *Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein*, *Es spricht der unweisen Mund wohl*, and *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir*. Luther added *Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g'mein* (Dear Christians, one and all rejoice) to this collection. In 1524, in the city of Luther's alma mater and first cloister home, Erfurt, the immense need for new hymns in German was met by two different publishers in the form of the *Erfurt Enchiridion*[10] containing twenty-five hymns in one version, twenty-six in the other, with eighteen of them being from Martin Luther. This hymnbook was reprinted many times and serves as a fundamental source of many later hymnbooks throughout the centuries. The third "Lutheran" hymnbook was the collection titled *Eyn geystlich Gesangk Buchleyn* (Spiritual Hymn Booklet), published in Wittenberg also in 1524. This hymnal contains thirty-seven polyphonic chorales arranged by Johann Walter, thirty-two of the hymns are German, the other five being in Latin, and twenty-four of the collection are from Martin Luther. With this hymnal being the first overseen by Luther himself, we see his underlying practical, theological premise for this endeavor. He writes in the foreword, "That it is good and God pleasing to sing hymns is, I think, known to every Christian; for everyone is aware not only of the example of the prophets and kings in the Old Testament who praised God with song and sound, with poetry and psaltery, but also of the common and ancient custom of the Christian church to sing psalms."[11] Following St. Paul's example in his letter to early Christian congregations, he argues that the church should "sing spiritual songs and psalms heartily unto

9. "Lutheran" is in quotes to denote those who were in the tradition following Luther and the Wittenberg theologians, the term Lutheran was coined by Johann Eck in the Leipzig Disputation of 1519 as a derogatory name to denote those who follow the heretical teachings of Luther. Luther did not like that name but preferred *evangelisch* (evangelical). By the end of the sixteenth century, Lutherans were using the name to positively denote themselves as the true church.

10. Broderson, *Erfurt Enchiridion*, 1. The translation of the original title page is certainly telling of the intent of such works, "An Enchiridion or little handbook, for a present-day Christian very useful to have with himself/herself for a continuous practice and contemplation of spiritual hymns and psalms 1524." Below it a reference to an index and then the following, "With these and similar hymns you shall justly educate the young youth."

11. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 53:315.

the Lord so that God's word and Christian teaching might be instilled and implanted in many ways."[12] Furthermore, Luther informs the reader that,

> these songs were arranged in four parts to give the young—who should at any rate be trained in music and other fine arts—something to wean them away from love ballads and carnal songs and to teach them something of value in their place. . . . Nor am I of the opinion that the gospel should destroy and blight all the arts, as some of the pseudo-religious claim. But I would like to see all the arts, especially music, used in the service of Him who gave and made them.[13]

Not only do we get a sense of what Luther hoped to achieve with the words of hymns filling the mouths and the ears of the faithful, we also see Luther's love of music in service to God's word and theology clearly stated.[14] It is worth noting that scholarship on the Reformation movement has oscillated between two poles: a mythic sensationalism of Luther and all that was supposedly accomplished by him alone and the extreme degree of his reforms and the extreme downplaying of what was accomplished with accusations of Luther being merely responsive and quite conservative. The historical reality lies somewhere between. The same is true in the field of Luther's liturgical reforms.[15]

By 1525–26, the situation had progressed to the point where Luther was ready to take on the task of creating a mass in the German language. At this point there were already quite a number of versions, but Luther was determined to add his mark. Luther set out to create a template guided by the freedom of the Gospel, not a legalistic form to be followed exactly to the letter for all time.[16] Luther composed some new melodies with German

12. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 53:315.

13. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 53:316.

14. Luther's appreciation of music can also be seen in his poem in *Frau Musica* (Dame Music), in his *Vorrede auff alle gute Gesangb*ücher (Preface for All Good Hymnals), in Luther, *Luther's Works*, 53:318–19. See also, Preface to George Rhau's Symphonia iuncundae, in *Luther's Works*, 53:319–21. And for introductory and in depth scholarship on Luther and his relationship to music, see: Hough, "Martin Luther and Musically Expressed Theology," 27–49; Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music*, 65–106 and 173–90; and Antilla, *Luther's Theology of Music*.

15. For a balanced and scholarly glimpse into the field of Luther and his liturgical reforms, see both works by Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music* and *The Whole Church Sings*.

16. Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music*, 292–304. A thorough analysis and support of Luther's theological motives present in his creation of the *Deutsche Messe* of 1526. Evangelical freedom and faith in Christ are foundational to understanding Luther's input.

texts for various liturgical elements to be sung. There are four locations for the congregation to sing with suggested options, and by this point there was already a growing repertoire of possible psalms and hymns. The exception is Luther's very free, metrical rendition of the creed, *Wir glauben all an einen Gott* (We all believe in one true God). Luther's text can be seen as a catechetical summation and interpretation of both the Nicene and Apostles' creeds. Luther's decision to ritually separate the blessing of the bread with distribution followed by the blessing of the wine with distribution is what allows for two places for hymns with a "Sanctus-like" character, like Luther's own setting of Isa 6, *Jesaja, dem Propheten, das geschah* (Isaiah in a vision did of old). Options amidst traditional, familiar, yet at times new, liturgical movements is the underlying premise to the *Deutsche Messe*. It was created to be more inspirational than dictatorial.

Whether it is the God who creates and provides, Christ who saves us in his loving act of sacrifice on the cross, or the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives, Luther's hymns were and are sung lessons in understanding the mysteries of the faith. If one knows his *Wir glauben all an einen Gott* (1524) and then reads his later expositions on the Creed in both his *Large* and *Small Catechisms*, one will see glimpses of the same Luther. In 1524, he also wrote *Dies sind der heilgen zehn Gebot*, (These are the holy Ten Commands) as an exposition of divine law. *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir* (1523/24) is Luther's understanding of Confession, and *Jesus Christus unser Heiland, der von uns* (Jesus Christ, our Savior, who turned [away God's wrath] from us—1524) is Luther's German adaptation of *Jesus Christus nostra solus* (Jesus Christ our Savior), attributed to John Hus, and an exposition of the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. After he wrote his catechisms in 1529, Luther the teacher, for both clergy and the laity, set out to complement what he had already written in the first two years as a hymnist. This led to him later write two more hymns for the remaining sections of his catechisms: the Lord's Prayer *Vater unser im Himmelreich* (Our Father God in heaven above—1539) and Holy Baptism *Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam* (To Jordan came the Christ, our Lord—1541/43), thereby creating a catechism one could sing and embody. Luther's hymn writing became a powerful tool for him to distill and disseminate the truths of God's word and provide a means to teach the growing evangelical (in the sense of Gospel oriented) understanding of the Christian faith in a way that was dear to him—through singing.

CONTRIBUTION TO LITURGY AND WORSHIP

Luther emphasized holding in tension those aspects of the liturgical tradition he inherited with innovation that was gospel centered. Luther significantly influenced the trajectory of the place of congregational strophic hymn singing that moved beyond the Gregorian chant. Texts beyond paraphrases of psalms, unlike the early Reformed tradition of Calvin and Zwingli, were created and took root in the minds and hearts of the faithful.

The liturgy is not created in a vacuum but neither is it bound by a sense of legalism. This is one of his lasting and strongest legacies. Luther's liturgical reforms and his thrust of congregational hymn singing had a fertilizing effect on the hymnody of his contemporaries. As Andrew Pettegree notes,

> although other ministerial colleagues would eagerly take up the charge, these original compositions of Luther always had a special status in the movement. . . . Luther's hymns were the stimulus for a vast outpouring of composition and publication that utterly defined his movement. In the course of the century, Germany's printers turned out over one thousand editions of the Germany hymnal.[17]

It is also important to note the lasting influence Luther's hymns had on significant composers of Western music. Heinrich Schütz, Johann Sebastian Bach,[18] Felix Mendelssohn, Johannes Brahms, and Max Reger all embraced the Lutheran chorale tradition and made it their own, with more or less attention to Luther's actual contributions. Through Luther's deep love of music and singing and his extreme proficiency of the word, he was able to offer a contribution of texts and in some cases melodies that have stood the test of the last five centuries.

NOTABLE HYMNS

Aside from what has already been mentioned, the following notable hymns have also contributed significantly to the worshiping faith and, in some cases, Western music.

Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin (In peace and joy I now depart) is Luther's paraphrase of the *Nunc dimittis* (Luke 2:29–32). Considering Luther's appreciation of Mary, it is interesting to note that he seemed not to have written a metrical hymn version of the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46–55). He

17. Pettegree, *Brand Luther*, 322.

18. See, Marshall, *Luther, Bach, and the Early Reformation Chorale*. Here is also an interesting explanation on Luther's use of the church modes.

assigned, instead, the *Tonus peregrinus* to the *Magnificat* for singing in worship. *Herr Gott dich loben wir* (Lord God we praise you) is Luther's rimed translation of the great hymn the *Te Deum* indicated to be sung antiphonally, whether this was two choirs or soloist and congregation with support by the choir or members of the choir.[19] This text along with his translation of the *Litanei* are both translations to be sung to plainchant and are not in a strophic form.

Erhalt uns Herr bei deinem Wort (Lord, keep us steadfast in your word) is noted as a song for children and could be among the catechetical hymns. It lifts up the desire to have God give us the strength against all adversities. A part of the original text is quite direct, however, as it encourages the demise of the enemies of the faith being the "Turk"—Muslims from the Ottoman Empire and the Pope.

The final five hymns all serve to emphasize major festivals of the church year. *Nun komm, der Heilden Heiland* (Savior of the nations, come) is Luther's hymn for Advent based on *Veni redemptor genitum*. *Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her* (From heaven above to earth I come), which is Luther's only contrafactum—reusing a secular tune *Ich kumm aus frembden Landen her* (I come from foreign lands) for a religious text. It was written as a children's hymn for Christmas Eve. Christmas Day was marked by *Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ* (All praise to you, eternal Lord) is based on the sequence hymn for Christmas Eve midnight *Grates nunc omnes*. *Christ lag in Todesbanden* (Christ Jesus lay in death's strong bands) is Luther's Easter hymn inspired by *Victimae paschale laudes*. Luther had already codified a version of the already extant *Christ ist erstanden* (Christ is arisen) also from the same Latin sequence hymn. And finally, *Nun bitten wir den Heiligen Geist* (Now to the Holy Spirit let us pray) is Luther's hymn for Pentecost based on the sequence hymn *Veni Sancte Spiritus*.

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19. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 53:4–96.

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