

HYMNS FROM THE GERMAN

by Frances Elizabeth Cox

A collection of spiritually rich verses and hymns for worship and reflection.

16 Chapters

Table of Contents

0. Hymns From the German
1. Arndt, Ernst Moritz--1769-1860--born in the Isle of Rugen; in 1806
2. Brunswick, Anton Ulrich, Duke of--1633-1714--pupil of the learned
3. Freylinghausen, Johann Anastasius--1670-1739--born at Gandersheim, in
4. Gerhard, Paul--1606-1676--of Gräfenhaynichen, in the circle of the
5. Lavater, Johann Caspar--1741-1801--minister in his native town, Zurich;
6. Meyfart, Johann Matthias--1590-1642--born at Wahlwinkel in the Duchy of
7. Nicolai, Philipp--1556-1608--a native of Waldeck, a learned theologian,
8. Rambach, Johann--1693-1735--born at Halle, professor and superintendent
9. Rinckart, Martin--1585-1649--a Saxon of Eilenburg in Misnia, where he
10. Sacer, Gottfried Wilhelm--1635-1699--a native of Naumburg, who was at
11. Schütz, Johann Jacob--1640-1690--native of Frankfort, an attorney and
12. Wiesenmayer (or Wiedemayer), Burchard, the author, not otherwise known,
13. Zihn, Johann Friedrich--1650-1719--Archdeacon at Suhla, in the province
14. Zwick, Johann--of Kostnitz, who died 1542; he was first a jurist, and
15. Transcriber's Notes

Hymns From the German

Arndt, Ernst Moritz--1769-1860--born in the Isle of Rugen; in 1806

Breslau, physician in ordinary to the Emperor Ferdinand the Third. In the year 1653 he resigned this post, went over to the Church of Rome, and became a priest, having previously, by a singular fancy, assumed the name of Angelus.

professor of philosophy at Greifswald, whose political writings so aroused the national spirit against the hated dominion of Napoleon, that they may be regarded as having mainly influenced the combination which eventually restored the independence of Germany. After the restoration, he was appointed professor of history at Bonn, in 1816; but in a few years having become an object of suspicion to the government, he was suspended, and ultimately deprived of his professorship. From being a writer of popular songs, he became a writer of sacred ones. His hymn "Geht nun hin und grabt mein Grab," must be reckoned one of the greatest gems of sacred poetry of the century.

Brunswick, Anton Ulrich, Duke of--1633-1714--pupil of the learned

Frederick Henry, and wife of Frederick William, Princes of Orange. A

Princess distinguished for her gentleness and charity. She was the foundress of the Oranienburg Orphan Asylum.

Schottelius; a learned Prince, who was a popular writer of his time.

Freylinghausen, Johann Anastasius--1670-1739--born at Gandersheim, in

Neubrandenburg. The worthy and distinguished descendant of the brave, intellectual, and pious general of Frederick the Great; he has given a beautiful and lasting memorial of his poetical spirit and his Christian mind, in the hymn "Was du vor tausend Jahren." He died at Halle in 1843.

Wolfenbüttel; a clergyman, and director of the Orphan Asylum at Halle.

Gerhard, Paul--1606-1676--of Gräfenhaynichen, in the circle of the

Haynichen, in Erzgebirge, and son of the minister of that place. He studied theology, in distressed circumstances, at Leipzig, but his bad health did not allow him to preach. He lived at Leipzig, and gave lectures (first as a master of arts and afterwards as extraordinary professor) on eloquence and moral philosophy, and gained as universally the reputation of an author and a pattern of pure taste, as he did love and esteem as a man and a Christian, by his integrity of conduct, and his unaffected piety and humility. Composing hymns was his favourite employment, in which, together with prayer, he spent the happiest hours of his life of suffering. All his hymns speak the simple Christian poet of the people, and many of them have lasting classic merit. His death, as was his life, was worthy of a Christian. When, in his last illness, his friends told him, in answer to his question, that the struggle between life and death might probably last an hour, he lifted up his hands with a cheerful countenance, exclaimed, "Now, God be praised, only an hour!" turned on his side, his eyes gleaming with joy, and gently breathed his last.

Electorate; the greatest of German hymn-writers. Scarcely had he attained his twelfth year, when the Thirty years' war broke out. Forced to quit his native land, he was appointed, in 1631, preacher at the Nicolai Church at Berlin, where he remained ten years, honoured and respected. But as his religious opinions differed from those of the King, he was ordered to quit the country. Utterly destitute, he and his wife directed their steps towards his native land, performing the journey on foot. When evening arrived, they sought repose at a little village inn, when his wife gave way to a burst of natural emotion.

Gerhard reminded her of the text beginning "Commit thy way unto the Lord," and retiring to an arbour in the garden, he composed the hymn "Befiehl du deine Wege," for which of all others he is most celebrated. When they were about to retire to rest, two gentlemen entered the parlour in which they were seated. One of them, in conversing with the poet, told him they were on their way to Berlin, in search of the deposed clergyman, Paul Gerhard, by order of Duke Christian of Merseberg. Gerhard's wife turned pale, but he calmly declared he was the person they were seeking. Great was the astonishment of both husband and wife, when one of the strangers delivered to Gerhard a letter from the duke, informing him that he had settled a considerable pension on him, as a compensation for the injustice of which he had been a victim. Then Gerhard turned to his wife, and gave her the hymn he had composed, with the words "See how God provides! did I not bid you to trust in God and all would be well?"

Lavater, Johann Caspar--1741-1801--minister in his native town, Zuric;

son of a furrier, early destined for the Church by his pious mother. He was minister at Koban, in Fürstenthum Glogau, but his bad health obliged him to resign his appointment, and he spent the last thirteen years of his life at Lissa. Being much tried during the horrors of the Thirty years' war, in which he several times almost miraculously escaped being murdered, his mind became more spiritually enlightened through his bodily sufferings, in the midst of which he wrote the greater number of his hymns, which are a true picture of his pious, humble, and prayerful soul. He dedicated them "Seinen lieben Kindern" (to his dear children).

who, with many infirmities and peculiarities, was an active and sincere Christian, and a talented orator, writer, and sacred poet. He died, after having performed the most blessed actions, and having been tried with many afflictions, which he bore with piety and constancy, in consequence of a fatal shot, which a French soldier maliciously aimed at him, after the storming of Zuric in 1799, as he was consoling and administering to the wants of the sufferers, in the streets. His hymns are numerous, and have been repeatedly printed.

Meyfart, Johann Matthias--1590-1642--born at Wahlwinkel in the Duchy of

uncompromising Reformer, whose simple yet vigorous hymns, full of evangelical doctrine, (for many of which he himself composed the tunes), found their way to the hearts of his countrymen; and had, perhaps, as much influence as his polemical writings in furthering the great work of the Reformation.

Gotha, a learned and talented theologian. His hymn "Jerusalem, du hochgebaute Stadt," in point of simplicity and sweetness has few equals.

Nicolai, Philipp--1556-1608--a native of Waldeck, a learned theologian,

[2] at Wernigerode. He published one hundred and thirty-four hymns in his "Hebopfer," (heave-offering).

[2] That is, in the Lutheran Church, one who has the ecclesiastical direction of a certain district.

and a parish priest a Hamburg. His hymns "Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme," and "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern," with their incomparable tunes, will ever remain favourites with the German nation. The latter was, in earlier times, almost always sung at weddings, especially of the country people.

Rambach, Johann--1693-1735--born at Halle, professor and superintendent

in 1793, "Gedichte und Lieder fürs Herz!" He lived to a great age. From the "Schwanen-lieder," (swan's songs) of this venerable old man, is taken "Wem in Leidenstagen."

at Giessen, a learned and truly pious man. His hymns combine the simplicity of the old with the fervour of the later school. They formed a much needed counterpoise to the preponderance of most hymn-writers of his day to sentimental and egotistic effusions.

Rinckart, Martin--1585-1649--a Saxon of Eilenburg in Misnia, where he

physician of Soran, in Lower Lusatia; he died in the prime of life, as he had himself predicted, while physician in the Orphan Asylum at Halle.

was an archdeacon. His hymn "Nun danket alle Gott," with the fine tune appropriated to it, has been called the national Te Deum of Germany.

Sacer, Gottfried Wilhelm--1635-1699--a native of Naumburg, who was at

near Altona, member of the ecclesiastical council and minister at Wedel; one of the most celebrated and influential poets of his day. He was, in the pulpit, as well as in sacred verse, an earnest preacher of Christianity, and was consequently attacked by the zealots of his time, because he did not preach enough upon matters in dispute, and against erroneous doctrine. To this he replied, that, "In his parish there were scarcely two persons who held erroneous doctrine, but there were many who led sinful lives." He had great trials in his youth, and in his later years he suffered from pillage, pestilence, and all the horrors of war. "The blessed cross," he says, "has produced from me many hymns." Though a great number of his hymns were adopted by many churches even during his lifetime, he would never suffer them to be sung in his own church, with the exception of a Christmas hymn, which, on one occasion, he allowed the children of the school to practise, and to begin to sing on that festival, "Wenn das Volk aus der Kirche zu gehen beginnt," as the people were beginning to go out of church. his death an advocate and privy-counsellor at Wolfenbüttel, distinguished in his official duties by a strict conscientiousness, and the most unbounded benevolence. He wrote the greater number of his hymns whilst a student at the university of Greifswald. Only a part of them appeared during his lifetime: they were collected and published in 1714, and immediately procured him the reputation of a distinguished poet.

Schütz, Johann Jacob--1640-1690--native of Frankfort, an attorney and

minister at Schweidnitz; a man of great piety, and very influential in his day. Most of his hymns (and they were above a thousand in number) are distinguished by a truly poetical and peculiar genius. Their characteristic is a simplicity and sincerity, which emulates that of Paul Gerhard, but without his sublimity.

member of the council of that city. His one single hymn "Sei Lob und Ehr dem höchsten Gut," appeared anonymously in 1673, and at once excited much interest, being ascribed to Hugo Grotius and others. It has ever since been considered one of the chief ornaments of German hymnology.

Wiesenmayer (or Wiedemayer), Burchard, the author, not otherwise known,

der Ruhr, as a ribbon-maker; a gentle heaven-inspired soul, whose hymns are the reflection of a heavenly, happy life, his mind being full of a childlike simplicity.

of several hymns. The first line of his Morning Hymn is in imitation of Nicolai's more celebrated hymn, "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern."

Zihn, Johann Friedrich--1650-1719--Archdeacon at Suhla, in the province

in that city. The hymn "O Ewigkeit, O Ewigkeit," is a serious and pious consideration of, and apostrophe to, Eternity, which in the last verse replies to man. The first seven verses, as far as the words "O lange Freud, O langes Leid," Wülffer found in an old hymn-book, perhaps that of Cologne; he improved them, and added the spirited conclusion. of Henneberg, of which place he was a native. He was the author of six hymns, of which "Gott lebet noch" is the best known.

Zwick, Johann--of Kostnitz, who died 1542; he was first a jurist, and

afterwards a theologian and minister in his native city; a pious and learned man.

ALPHABETISCHES REGISTER.

Seite

- [223]Ach, was ist doch unsre Zeit? 134
- [224]Auf! auf! weil der Tag erschienen 22
- [225]Auf, schicke dich 38
- [226]Befiehl du deine Wege 160
- [227]Bei stiller Nacht 44
- [228]Da Jesus an des Kreuzes Stamm 56
- [229]Der Tag ist hin 18
- [230]Die goldne Sonne 12
- [231]Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott 226
- [232]Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die Schuld 106
- [233]Ein reines Herz, Herr, schaff in mir, 176
- [234]Eins ist Noth: ach Herr, dies Eine 216
- [235]Erhebt euch, frohe Jubellieder 78
- [236]Geh aus, mein Herz, und suche Freud 148
- [237]Geht nun hin und grabt mein Grab 82
- [238]Gott, Den ich als Liebe kenne 190
- [239]Gott fähret auf gen Himmel 62
- [240]Gott lebet noch! 128
- [241]Guter Hirte, willst Du nicht 168
- [242]Halt im Gedächtniss Jesum Christ 110
- [243]Herzliebster Jesu, was hast Du verbrochen 50
- [244]Himmelan geht unsre Bahn 210

[245]Hochheilige Dreieinigkeit 68
[246]Ich singe Dir mit Herz und Mund 154
[247]Ich will von meiner Missethat 204
[248]Im Abend blinkt der Morgenstern 42
[249]Jerusalem, du hochgebaute Stadt 100
[250]Jesus lebt, mit Ihm auch ich 60
[251]Keine Schönheit hat die Welt 144
[252]Lebt, ihr Christen, so allhier auf Erden 96
[253]Liebe, die Du mich zum Bilde 200
[254]Liebster Jesu, hier sind wir 72
[255]Mein Jesu, der Du vor dem Scheiden 74
[256]Nach Dir, o Gott, verlangst mich 114
[257]Nun danket alle Gott 238
[258]Nun ruhen alle Wälder 8
[259]Nun so will ich denn mein Leben 234
[260]Nun tret ich wieder aus der Ruh 184
[261]O Ewigkeit! O Ewigkeit! 138
[262]O Geist des Herrn, nur deine Kraft 66
[263]O Gott, Du frommer Gott 178
[264]O Liebe Seele, könntst du werden 196
[265]Sei Lob und Ehr dem höchsten Gut 234
[266]So hab ich obgesieget 86
[267]Steil und dornig ist der Pfad 174
[268]Wach auf, wach auf, du sichre Welt 30
[269]Wachet auf! ruft uns die Stimme 26
[270]Walte, walte nah und fern 222
[271]Was Du vor tausend Jahren 170
[272]Was Gott thut, das ist wohl gethan 124
[273]Wem in Leidenstagen 188

[274]Wer sind die vor Gottes Throne? 90
[275]Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern 2
[276]Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern 228
[277]Wir singen Dir, Immanuel 34
[278]Zeuch ein zu deinen Thoren 116

ALPHABETICAL INDEX.

Page

[279]A Fortress firm and steadfast Rock 227
[280]A holy, pure, and spotless Lamb 107
[281]A new and contrite heart create 177
[282]A thousand years have fleded 171
[283]Bear Jesus Christ the Lord in mind 111
[284]Come, enter Thine own portal 117
[285]Come forth, my heart, and seek delight 149
[286]Come, tune your heart 39
[287]Earth has nothing sweet or fair 145
[288]Eternity! Eternity! 139
[289]Far and near, almighty Word 223
[290]From blest, unconscious sleep I wake again 185
[291]Go! and let my grave be made 83
[292]God liveth still! 129
[293]Heavenward still our pathway tends 211
[294]How lovely now the Morning-star 3
[295]How lovely now the Morning-star 229
[296]I sing to Thee with mouth and heart 155
[297]Jerusalem! thou City towering high 101
[298]Jesus lives! no longer now 61
[299]Jesus, Lord, Thy servants see 73
[300]Lift heart, and hands, and voice 239

[301]Lo! God to heaven ascendeth! 63
[302]Lo! my choice is now decided 215
[303]Love, Who in the first beginning 201
[304]Most high and holy Trinity! 69
[305]My race is now completed 87
[306]Now hushed are woods and waters 9
[307]O fear not, Christians, that rough path to tread 97
[308]O God, Whose attributes shine forth in turn 191
[309]O Holy Ghost! thy heavenly dew 67
[310]O Lord! I long thy face to see 115
[311]O Lord, Who on that last sad eve 75
[312]Oh! let him whose sorrow 189
[313]One thing needful! then, Lord Jesus 217
[314]Rise high, ye notes, a glad ovation 79
[315]Seven Times our blessed Saviour spoke 57
[316]Sing praise to God Who reigns above 235
[317]Soul, while on earth thou still remainest 197
[318]Steep and thorny is the way 175
[319]Sunbeams all golden 13
[320]The day is o'er 19
[321]The Last of Days will come indeed 31
[322]The wondering sages trace from far 43
[323]Thou good and gracious God 179
[324]To God thy way commending 161
[325]Wake! the startling watchcry peaaleth 27
[326]Wake! the welcome Day appeareth 23
[327]We sing to Thee, Emmanuel 35
[328]What God bath done is done aright 125
[329]What is human life below? 135

- [330]What laws, my blessed Saviour, hast Thou broken 51
[331]Who are these, like stars appearing, 91
[332]Wilt Thou not, my Shepherd true 169
[333]With sorrow now for past misdeeds 205
[334]Within a Garden's bound 45

INHALTSVERZEICHNIS.

Seite

- [335]Morgenlied 2
[336]Abendlied 8
[337]Morgenlied 12
[338]Abendlied 18
[339]Adventlied. I. 22
[340]Adventlied. II. 26
[341]Adventlied. III. 30
[342]Weihnachtslied, I. 34
[343]Weihnachtslied. II. 38
[344]Epiphaniastlied 42
[345]Gethsemane 44
[346]Lied für den Charfreitag. I. 50
[347]Lied für den Charfreitag. II. 56
[348]Osterlied 60
[349]Himmelfahrtstlied 62
[350]Pfingstlied 66
[351]Lied für die Trinitatiszeit 68
[352]Tauflied 72
[353]Lied zur Heiligen Communion 74
[354]Trauungslied 78
[355]Des Sterbenden Christens Lebewohl 82
[356]Beim Begräbnis eines Kindes 86

[357]Verklärte Heiligen 90
[358]Christi Fusstapfen 96
[359]Die Himmelsstadt 100
[360]Das unschuldige Lamm 106
[361]Aufsehend auf Jesum 110
[362]Gottergebenheit 114
[363]Anrufung des Heiligen Geistes 116
[364]Gottvertrauen 124
[365]Selbstgespräch eines Christen 128
[366]Die Vergänglichkeit des Lebens 134
[367]Ewigkeit 138
[368]Sommerlied. I. 144
[369]Sommerlied. II. 148
[370]Gottes Vorsehung 154
[371]Das Vertrauende Herz 160
[372]Lied an dem Treuen Hirte 168
[373]Christus unser Licht 170
[374]Des Sieges Krone 174
[375]Des Christen Gebet. I. 176
[376]Des Christen Gebet. II. 178
[377]Des Kranken Morgenlied 184
[378]Trost des Traurenden 188
[379]Der Leidensweg 190
[380]Kindliches Gemüthe 196
[381]Lied an dem Gott der Liebe 200
[382]Das zerknirschte Herz 204
[383]Himmelan! 210
[384]Die gute Wahl 214
[385]Eins ist noth 216

- [386]Bibellied 222
- [387]Ein Fels ewiglich 226
- [388]Der Morgenstern 228
- [389]Lobgesang. I. 234
- [390]Lobgesang. II. 238

INDEX OF SUBJECTS.

Page

- [391]Morning Hymn 3
- [392]Evening Hymn 9
- [393]Morning Hymn 13
- [394]Evening Hymn 19
- [395]Advent Hymn. I. 23
- [396]Advent Hymn. II. 27
- [397]Advent Hymn. III. 31
- [398]Christmas Hymn. I. 35
- [399]Christmas Hymn. II. 39
- [400]Epiphany Hymn 43
- [401]Gethsemane 45
- [402]Hymn for Good Friday. I. 51
- [403]Hymn for Good Friday. II. 57
- [404]Easter Hymn 61
- [405]Hymn for Ascension Day 63
- [406]Hymn for Whit-Sunday 67
- [407]Hymn for Trinity Sunday 69
- [408]Baptismal Hymn 73
- [409]Hymn for Holy Communion 75
- [410]Wedding Hymn 79
- [411]The dying Christian's Farewell 83
- [412]On the Burial of a Child 87

[413]Saints in Glory 91
[414]The Footprints of Christ 97
[415]The Heavenly City 101
[416]The Spotless Lamb 107
[417]Looking unto Jesus 111
[418]Devotedness to God 115
[419]Invocation of the Holy Spirit 117
[420]Trust in God 125
[421]The Christian to his Soul 129
[422]The shortness of Life 135
[423]Eternity 139
[424]Hymn for Summer. I. 145
[425]Hymn for Summer. II. 149
[426]God's Providence 155
[427]The Trusting Heart 161
[428]Hymn to the Good Shepherd 169
[429]Christ our Light 171
[430]The Crown of Victory 175
[431]The Christian's Prayer. I. 177
[432]The Christian's Prayer. II. 179
[433]The Invalid's Morning Hymn 185
[434]The Mourner's Consolation 189
[435]The Path of Grief 191
[436]Childlike Temper 197
[437]Hymn to the God of Love 201
[438]The Contrite Heart 205
[439]Heavenward still! 211
[440]The good choice 215
[441]The one thing needful 217

[442]Bible Hymn 223

[443]The Rock of Ages 227

[444]The Morning Star 229

[445]Hymn of Praise. I. 235

[446]Hymn of Praise. II. 239

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Transcriber's Notes

- * Silently corrected some typos (note that the German included archaic and modern spellings both.)
- * Consistently included author and date on the same line, right justified (the date had often been on a separate line)
- * Consistently included scripture references on the next line, right justified (some had been on the same line after a dash.)
- * Re-ordered pages to present each hymn (German and English) as a unit (the original showed German and English interlaced on facing pages.)
- * Note that there is no source information about anonymous hymns in the original book.

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