

**LYRA GERMANICA:
HYMNS FOR THE SUNDAYS
AND CHIEF FESTIVALS
OF THE CHRISTIAN YEAR**

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Lyra Germanica: hymns for the Sundays and chief festivals of the Christian year by Catherine Winkworth

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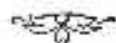
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CATHERINE WINKWORTH

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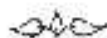
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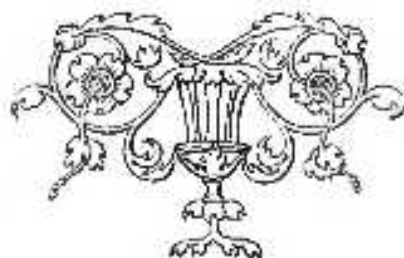
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TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY
CATHERINE WINKWORTH.

Second Edition.



LONDON:
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1856.

11a
UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA



TO HIS EXCELLENCY
THE CHEVALIER BUNSEN,
ETC. ETC. ETC.

THESE HYMNS ARE, BY HIS KIND PERMISSION,
RESPECTFULLY AND GRATEFULLY
DEDICATED BY
THE TRANSLATOR.

486331



PREFACE.

THE following hymns are selected from the Chevalier Bunsen's "Versuch eines allgemeinen Gesang und Gebetbuchs," published in 1833. From the large number there given, about nine hundred, little more than one hundred have been chosen. This selection contains many of those best known and loved in Germany, but in a work of this size it is impossible to include all that have become classical in that home of Christian poetry. In reading them it must be remembered that they are hymns, not sacred poems, though from their length and the intricacy of their metres, many of them may seem to English readers adapted rather to purposes of private than of public devotion. But the singing of hymns forms a much larger and more important part

of public worship in the German Reformed Churches than in our own services. It is the mode by which the whole congregation is enabled to bear its part in the worship of God, answering in this respect to the chanting of our own Liturgy.

Ever since the Reformation, the German church has been remarkable for the number and excellence of its hymns and hymn-tunes. Before that time it was not so. There was no place for congregational singing in public worship, and therefore the spiritual songs of the latter part of the middle ages assumed for the most part an artificial and unpopular form. Yet there were not wanting germs of a national Church poetry in the verses rather than hymns which were sung in German on pilgrimages and at some of the high festivals, many of which verses were again derived from more ancient Latin hymns. Several of Luther's hymns are amplifications of verses of this class, such as the Pentecostal hymn here given, "Come, Holy Spirit, God and Lord,"* which is founded on a German version of the "Veni Sancte Spiritus, Reple." By adopting these verses, and retain-

* Page 118.

ing their well-known melodies, Luther enabled his hymns to spread rapidly among the common people. He also composed metrical versions of several of the Psalms, the Te Deum, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Nunc Dimittis, the Da nobis Pacem, &c. thus enriching the people, to whom he had already given the Holy Scriptures in their own language, with a treasure of that sacred poetry which is the precious inheritance of every Christian Church.

The hymn, "In the midst of life,"* is one of those founded on a more ancient hymn, the "Media in vita" of Notker, a learned Benedictine of St. Gall, who died in 912. He is said to have composed it while watching some workmen, who were building the bridge of Martinsbruck at the peril of their lives. It was soon set to music, and became universally known; indeed it was used as a battle-song, until the custom was forbidden on account of its being supposed to exercise magical influences. In a German version it formed part of the service for the burial of the dead, as early as the thirteenth century, and is still preserved in an un-

* Page 237.

metrical form in the Burial Service of our own Church.

The carol, "From Heaven above to earth I come,"* is called by Luther himself, "a Christmas child's song concerning the child Jesus." He wrote it for his little boy Hans, when the latter was five years old, and it is still sung from the dome of the Kreuzkirche in Dresden before day-break on the morning of Christmas Day. It refers to the custom then and long afterwards prevalent in Germany, of making at Christmas-time representations of the manger with the infant Jesus. But the most famous of his hymns is his noble version of the 46th Psalm, "A sure stronghold our God is He,"† which may be called the national hymn of his Protestant countrymen. Luther's hymns are wanting in harmony and correctness of metre to a degree which often makes them jarring to our modern ears, but they are always full of fire and strength, of clear Christian faith, and brave joyful trust in God.

From his time there has been a constant succession of hymn-writers in the German church. Paul Eber, an intimate friend of Me-

* Page 12.

† Page 175.