

O Faithful God, Thanks Be to Thee

Wir danken dir, o treuer Gott
Nikolaus Selnecker, 1587
Tr. composite

8.8. 8.8.

Erhalt uns, Herr
Geistliche Lieder auff's new gebessert,
Wittenberg, 1543

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and common time. It consists of four systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a lute line (bass clef). The lyrics are: "O faith - ful God, thanks be to Thee Who dost for - give in - iq - ui - ty. Thou grant - est help in sin's dis - tress, And soul and bod - y dost Thou bless." The lute line provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

- 2 Thy servant's mouth declares to me:
"Thy sins are all forgiven thee.
Depart in peace, but sin no more
And e'er My pard'ning grace adore."
- 3 O Lord, we bless Thy gracious heart,
For Thou Thyself dost heal our smart
Through Christ our Savior's precious blood,
Which for the sake of sinners flowed.
- 4 Give us Thy Spirit, peace afford
Now and forever, gracious Lord.
Thy Word and holy Sacrament
Preserve to us unto the end.

Nikolaus Selnecker, a major contributor to the Formula of Concord, wrote the hymn text “O Faithful God, Thanks Be to Thee (*Wir danken dir, o treuer Gott*)” as part of a set of hymns on the Chief Parts of the Catechism included with a collection of “Three Sermons” dated 1572. He then included an expanded form of the hymn in his *Christliche Psalmen* of 1587, where it was printed with the title “On the Holy Absolution. A Thanksgiving.” It was not the first hymn to be written on the Office of the Keys and Confession, but it was concise, simple, and effective, and passed into common usage as a Catechism hymn.

Selnecker originally assigned to his text the tune “*Veni redemptor gentium* (Come, Redeemer of the Nations),” the ancient plainchant melody for St. Ambrose’s hymn on the Incarnation of Our Lord. Luther had already adapted the melody for several of his hymn tunes: “*Nun komm der Heiden Heiland*,” to accompany his translation of Ambrose’s text, “Savior of the Nations, Come”; “*Erbalt uns, Herr*,” for his children’s hymn, “Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word”; and “*Verleib uns Frieden*” for “O Grant Us Peace Most Graciously,” his translation of the “*Da pacem Domine* (Give Peace, O Lord).” Of these, the simplest and most well-known was “*Erbalt uns, Herr*,” and it was this tune that was assigned to Selnecker’s text in later hymnals.

The text used for the Free Lutheran Chorale-Book is the composite translation from *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 1941, No. 321, with the exception of some slight changes to the second half of the last stanza to bring it more closely in line with Selnecker’s original. Both text and music are in the public domain and may be freely used and reproduced for any purpose whatever. They are offered with the prayer that they may serve for the edification of Christian people everywhere. For more information, visit the Free Lutheran Chorale-Book at:

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The Free Lutheran Chorale-Book

presents

O Faithful God, Thanks Be to Thee

a

Hymn of Thanksgiving

for the

Holy Absolution

by

Nikolaus Selnecker

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