



A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing

Text: The Venerable Bede (672-735)

Tune: Unknown; Cologne, 1623

“A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing” is the first of the Ascension hymns given in *the Lutheran Hymnal*. Whether this is intentional or accidental we may never know, but either way it is a fitting introduction to Christ’s Ascension and the hymns inspired by this event. This is also our most ancient Ascension hymn which has become a treasure and a joy for generations of Christians.



The Venerable Bede

The hymn was written by the Venerable Bede, of whom little is known. All the reliable information on Bede is written in the last chapter of *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, his most known work which records the history of Christendom in England. While some information can also be garnered from a letter by his student, Cuthbert, which records Bede’s death, the information is minimal. Bede records that he was born on the lands of the monastery from which he wrote, the twin monastery of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow, in modern-day Newcastle upon Tyne, in northern England. His name is from the old English *bæd*, which means “prayer,” although the adjective “Venerable” was not added until the ninth century. If this was, in fact, his name from birth, then his family likely intended that he go to the monastery. This conclusion is supported by the fact that Bede entered the monastic life at age 7. By age 20, Bede was ordained a Deacon, though Canon Law prescribes the minimum age to be 25, which proves Bede’s exceptional intelligence and background. He was ordained a Priest at age 30. Little is known of the remainder of Bede’s life. He died on May 26, 735, which, interestingly enough

was Ascension Day that year, and Bede’s most famous hymn is his hymn for Ascension. His remains are buried at Durham Cathedral.

Bede was a prolific writer, though almost none of his writings remain. As was mentioned above, his most known work is his *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, the Ecclesiastical History of the English People. The work begins in 55 B.C. when Caesar invaded England and concludes in Bede’s day with missionary work in Frisia (a region along the North Sea extending from the Netherlands to the border of Denmark). Bede also wrote several commentaries on books of both the Old and New Testaments and several volumes of his sermons were published and remain to this day. At the time of his death, Bede was working on a translation of the Gospel according to St. John into English.

The tune associated with this hymn, LAßT UNS ERFREUEN, was written around 1623 for an Easter hymn in the Jesuit hymnal, *Ausserlesene Catholische Geistliche Kirchengesänge*.



The hymn *Laßt uns Erfreuen* in its first printing.

“A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing” is one of the best Ascension hymns available. Its structure is very typical of early hymnody, as it first tells the Biblical account of the Ascension and then explains the meaning of the event for the Christian. While stanzas 1-4 retell the Ascension account, stanzas 5-7 tell us the importance of Christ’s Ascension. Stanza 5 tells us why Jesus Ascended into heaven, namely so that we may also ascend to heaven where Christ, our Head, has gone before. Where He is now is where our faith has its home, with Christ. Stanza 6 then explains this in present terms, that Christ is now our Joy and strong Defense and constant source of Light in the darkness of sin, but also our future Recompense (often translated as “great Reward” in newer hymnals). His light will be ours for all eternity. Finally, stanza 7 summarizes the Ascension in Trinitarian terms. For Christ’s Resurrection and Ascension we praise the Holy Trinity for His love towards us that caused Christ to become our Savior. Because of His work for us, our song will eternally be “Alleluia!”