



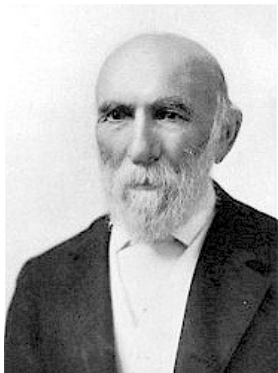
## An Awe-Full Mystery Is Here

**Text: Matthias Loy (1828-1915)**

**Tune: George J. Elvey (1816-1893)**

We know quite well that Lutheran hymns are designed to be catechetical, that they were written to help teach the faith. This is especially true regarding Lutheran hymns about the Sacrament of the Altar. Throughout the Lord's Supper section of our hymnal (hymns 304-316) the same themes appear several times: our reason's inability to understand how the Body and Blood of Christ are present when all our eyes can see is bread and wine, our unworthiness to receive this forgiving Gift of Christ, and the work this Sacrament does in preserving our faith throughout life. All of these themes are captured well in "An Awe-full Mystery Is Here."

This hymn's author is Matthias Loy. Loy was born March 17, 1828 near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, the fourth of seven children.



Matthias Loy

Loy's mother, the Lutheran in the family, was responsible for her children's education and upbringing in the Lutheran Church. At the age of fourteen Loy became an apprentice for Baab and Hummel, the printers of Harrisburg. It was through this work that he got to know the Rev. Charles William Schäffer (translator of "Come, Follow Me, the Savior Spake), who suggested that he become a Lutheran pastor. Intrigued by the idea, Loy began studying Latin and Greek with the principal of the Harrisburg Academy. In 1847 he accepted a contract from the United

Brethren Publishing House to print a semimonthly German paper in Circleville, Ohio. Shortly after arriving, the Lutheran pastor there

encouraged him to enroll at the Theological Seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Ohio. He left his position at the German paper and enrolled with the Circleville pastor funding his education. When he graduated in 1849 he was called to a congregation in Delaware, Ohio. In 1860 he was elected president of the Joint Synod of Ohio. In 1865 he began serving as professor of theology at Capital University and served in both positions simultaneously. In 1878 he resigned from the presidency of the Ohio Synod. He became president of Capital University in 1880. He retired from the University in 1902, and died in 1915.

The Ohio Synod which Loy served as president from 1860-1878 and 1880-1892, upon the death of his successor, started as a part of the Synodical Conference (forerunner of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod), but Loy disagreed with C.F.W. Walther on predestination, saying that some cause in man led to his salvation. In 1881 the Ohio Synod joined with the Norwegian Lutherans as well as the Buffalo Synod to form the "Old American Lutheran Church," which eventually became the American Lutheran Church, which was a founding member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Loy rightly identifies the Lord's Supper as an "awe-full mystery." We cannot understand how "the Savior comes as food divine concealed in earthly bread and wine" (st. 1). Though we do not understand how both earthly and Divine elements can be in the same place at the same time, or how Christ can be on countless Altars at the same time, we rejoice that He does because that is where "the King of Glory stoops to me" to forgive all my sin (st. 2). Just because we do not understand how does not mean that it is not true. The very Word of Christ promises that His Body and Blood are here (st. 3). Faith must cling to these Words, trusting in the One who spoke them. Only that faith can see the worth of this Sacrament, and the Word of Christ alone must guide that faith (st. 4). This hymn ends with a prayer that Christ would abide among us always by this Sacrament to "give faith to every wavering soul and make each wounded spirit whole." Only in Him do we know perfect health and healing and only in Him is there hope for this life and the future.