



## God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It

**Text: Erdmann Neumeister (1671-1756)**

**Tune: Johann Caspar Bachofen (1695-1755)**

In his Large Catechism, Martin Luther wrote, “[Baptism] is a most precious thing, even though to all appearances it may not be worth a straw” (LC IV 8). To the world, Baptism may look like a superstitious rite or simply an earthly event, but Baptism is central in the life of a Christian, God’s work where He makes us His dear children. By water and the Word we are saved, that is, “delivered from sin, death, and the devil, to enter into Christ’s Kingdom, and to live with Him forever” (LC IV 25). Seventeenth century hymnwriter Erdmann Neumeister wrote a hymn praising the gift of Baptism, a hymn second only to Luther’s great Baptismal hymn, “To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord.” Neumeister gives us the courage to sing in the face of sin, death, and Satan, because “I am Baptized into Christ!”



Erdmann  
Neumeister

Erdmann Neumeister was born May 12, 1671. In 1689 he entered the University of Leipzig, where he received a Masters Degree in 1695, but remained to serve as lecturer at the university. He became Assistant Pastor in Bibra in 1697 and Pastor in 1698. He later became Court Preacher in Weissenfels. From 1715 until his death August 18, 1756, he served as Pastor of St. James in Hamburg.

Although Neumeister was a prolific hymnwriter, writing an estimated 650 hymns, the majority are lost to American Lutherans. ☒ *e Lutheran Hymnal* contained only two of his hymns (“Jesus Sinners Doth Receive” and “I Know My Faith

is Founded,”). However, Lutherans are beginning to translate more of his hymns, and newer hymnals include more of his body of work. One of his best, however, is this hymn, “God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say It.” Neumeister was a firmly-founded Lutheran who wrote and preached extensively against Pietism and other forces seeking to undermine the Gospel in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, something seen extensively here. He also wrote the texts of five Cantatas of J.S. Bach. The first was the text for BWV 5, *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, “Savior of the Nations, Come,” written for the First Sunday of Advent 1714. The last was *Gottlob! nun geht das Jahr zu Ende*, “Praise God! The Year Now Draws to a Close,” written for the First Sunday after Christmas, December 30, 1725.

“God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say It” has been wedded to the tune BACHOFEN, composed by Johann Caspar Bachofen, a Swedish composer. Though Bachofen was a Pastor (he studied theology and was Ordained in 1719), he never served as a Pastor, but spent his career as a music teacher. During his life he produced several volumes of sacred songs and hymn arrangements for choirs and small groups of instruments. These arrangements were immensely popular and remained in print until 1803.

Bachofen’s lively melody only helps to add to the joy present in Neumeister’s Baptismal hymn. At every turn, the singer praises Christ for the great gifts He has given freely through this Sacrament. Our Baptism into Christ is greater than any of earth’s treasures because it gives us Christ’s atoning death, where He paid our full redemption price (st. 1). The most remarkable part of this hymn is the direct address to sin (st. 2), Satan (st. 3), and death (st. 4). None of these things have any power over us because Baptism has released us from sin, unraveled Satan’s power, and made death nothing more than our entrance into eternal life. “God, my Lord, unites with me” against all these forces that would destroy us, giving us a peace and confidence that can only come from the never-ending love of Christ. This hymn is perfect for a Christian of any age to sing. Not only is it catechetical, in that it teaches the institution and benefits of Baptism, but it confesses the faith. Faith, given in Holy Baptism, gives us the confidence to sing, even in the face of death: “I am Baptized into Christ; I’m a child of paradise!”