



My Inmost Heart Now Raises

Text: Georg Nigidius (1525-1588)

Tune: David Wolder (c. 1504-1604)

All hymns have a life cycle. Some are immensely popular when they are written and soon after fall into disuse and are forgotten. Others are ignored at first, only to find a life in the generations following. Others see their use ebb and flow over time. “My Inmost Heart Now Raises” is a hymn that falls into the latter category. The story of this hymn demonstrates how faithful hymns are a blessing to the Church at various times, being learned by new generations as each rediscovers it.

Just as this hymn has an interesting history, so does its author. Georg Nigidius (or, Niede, depending on regional spellings), was born November 25, 1525, the son of Peter Nigidius, the composer of the tune for the hymn “O God, Be With Us” (TLH #556). At nine years old Georg was sent to Kassel where the town’s Kantor (theologically-trained church musician), Georg Kern, gave Nigidius a thorough musical foundation and education. In 1542 he began studies at the University of Marburg, graduation in 1546 with his bachelor’s degree. Upon graduation he enlisted as a soldier, a choice which caused him to have constant moves the remainder of his life. As a soldier in the Smalcald War (1547-1555, a war waged by Charles V after Luther’s death to attempt to bring religious unity to the empire), he fought in Bremen, Scotland, Hamburg, and became a prisoner of war in Berlin. After his release he became a notary in Buxtehude, then an executive commissioner in State. In the war between Denmark and Sweden he was made a captain. After twenty years of intermittent service as a soldier in various wars, Nigidius went on to hold various public offices. He became the city magistrate of Lage and in 1585 steward of streets in Herford. He moved to Rinteln in 1587, where he died July 4, 1588 of a stroke.

During his time of service, no one knew that Nigidius was a gifted author and composer. It was not until 1918 when Paul Aluthaus discovered the manuscripts of several volumes of poetry and music in the royal library of Berlin that anyone knew of Nigidius’s work. The discovered work was entitled *Die Seven Penitential Psalms together with all manner of Christian Hymns of Praise and Thanksgiving, and also Prayers and Passages of Scripture Composed and Compiled by Georg Niede of Allendorf, a Captain*. Nigidius had attempted to have his work published, but was unable to find someone willing to publish it. He sent it to Nikolaus Selnecker (author of “Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide,” TLH #292), hoping he might be able to use his influence to find a publisher. Though Selnecker said of Nigidius’s work, “Those beautiful songs are full of comfort and would refresh many Christians,” he was also unable to find a publisher. So his work was tucked away in a library and forgotten for several decades, until this hymn, “My Inmost Heart Now Raises,” was published in the *Cretzbüchlein* of Herford in 1587. However, the printer in Herford did not have musical notation in his printer, so Nigidius’s tune for this hymn, as well as his other tunes, were lost forever.

As a faithful Lutheran, it is likely that Nigidius had a copy of Martin Luther’s Small Catechism, and knew his morning and evening prayers. “My Inmost Heart now Raises” seems to be a paraphrase and expansion of Luther’s Moring Prayer:

I thank Thee, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, that Thou hast graciously kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray Thee that Thou wouldst keep me this day also, from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please Thee. For into Thy hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Thy holy angel be with me, that the wicked Foe may have no power over me. Amen.

It is rumored that Gustavus Adolphus and his soldiers sang this hymn daily at Matins. It is surely a good hymn for all Christians to know and to cherish. Stanza after stanza, we are reminded that God Himself is in control of all things and will guard and keep us from the wicked Foe, because He loves us and knows what is best for us. May we always have the Spirit-given strength to add our “Amen” to this hymn and prayer, trusting fully in our gracious God!