



To the Name of Our Salvation

Text: Anonymous, 15th century

Tune: Anonymous, *Geistliches Gesangbuch*, Darmstadt, 1698

As we draw near to the season of Epiphany, our thoughts start to turn to the contemplation of Our Lord Jesus Christ as fully God and fully man. One such example of His bearing of two natures is that He has a human name. But Our Lord has a name that is more than a name, it is a title. Jesus means “the Lord saves,” and is a version of the Hebrew name Joshua, which means the same thing. Jesus is given this name because, unlike Joshua who needed a Savior, He is the One who saves His people from their sins. At this time in the Church Year, as we celebrate the giving of Jesus’ name, it is appropriate for us to consider all that is wrapped up in that holy Name of our Savior.

The hymn, “To the Name of Our Salvation” is an excellent hymn that gives us full consideration of all that Our Lord’s Name means to us as Christians. Like countless hymns in the history of the Church’s song, its author has been lost to the ages. However, we do know that this hymn likely had liturgical usage in 15th century Germany. Its earliest appearance is in the Meißen Breviary of 1510 (a breviary is a book that contains the prayers, hymns, Psalms, readings, and notations used by clergy in praying the Divine Offices [Matins, Vespers, etc.]). There it is given the heading, *In festo S. Nominis Jesu*, for the Feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus.

This hymn was translated by the Rev. John Mason Neale (1818-1866). Neale had significant learning and was afforded the finest education of his day. His university education began at Trinity College, Cambridge. Though he attempted a degree in Classics (the study of language, literature, philosophy, history, art, archaeology, and other areas of culture), at the time Trinity had a requirement for

the study of mathematics. However, Neale detested mathematics and for that reason was unable to receive a degree in the Classics. Though he was unable to receive this degree, he achieved significant notoriety, attaching himself to several well-known organizations and earning the Seatonian Prize no less than eleven times, an award conferred at Trinity College for the composition of the finest sacred poetry.



John Mason Neale

Though Neale was a gifted writer and composer of poetry, he is best known for his translations of Greek and Latin hymns. Because he also had considerable musical knowledge, he was able to produce translations which honored the original text while putting it into English in a way that was not wooden, but followed the spirit of the melody. In his lifetime he published several volumes of Latin hymns (*Medieval Hymns and Sequences*, 1851; *The Hymnal, Noted*, 1852-54; *Hymns, chiefly Medieval, on the Joys and Glories of Paradise*, 1865) and one volume Greek hymns (*Hymns of the Eastern Church*, 1862). However, Neale is to be praised for his work on Greek hymns, for he was the first known English speaker to attempt translations of ancient Greek hymnody.

“To the Name of Our Salvation” sings the pleasures of the Name of Jesus. This name “which for many a generation hid in God’s foreknowledge lay” (st. 1) came in the fullness of time, revealing God’s plan for our salvation from sin, death, and the devil. We treasure the Name of Jesus because it not only saves us from sin and hell (st. 2), but it is the Name that gives us relief “in this vale of misery,” for we know that it is the Name spoken “by the citizens on high,” whom we will someday join, by God’s grace (st. 3). We join that heavenly company because, by the Name of Jesus, “powers of hell are put to flight” (st. 5). And these powers of hell are put to flight by the waters of Holy Baptism, where the Name of Jesus is written in and on us here (st. 6), and because His saving Name is placed upon us, we know that after this life, we, “heavenward soaring,” will laud the Name of Jesus and “sing with angels there” (st. 6).