

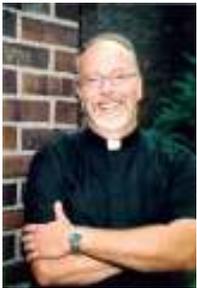


We Praise You and Acknowledge You, O God

Text: Stephen P. Starke (b. 1955)

Tune: Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

One of Lutheranism's contributions to hymnody has been the paraphrase of liturgical texts. Hymns like "All Glory Be to God on High" and "All Glory Be to God Alone" are paraphrases of the *Gloria in Excelsis*. Luther himself also contributed to this by way of "We All Believe in One True God" as his paraphrase of the Nicene Creed and his Sanctus, "Isaiah, Mighty Seer in Days of Old." This tradition continues on today. One of the most beloved modern paraphrases is "We Praise You and Acknowledge You, O God," a paraphrase of the *Te Deum Laudamus*, the canticle from the Office of Matins. The Rev. Stephen P. Starke is the author of this text and many other paraphrases of liturgical texts.



Stephen Starke

The Rev. Starke is Pastor of St. John Lutheran Church in Bay City, Michigan, the church he has served since 2000. Since he started writing hymns in his last year studying at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, he has penned more than 175 hymns, 32 of which appear in *Lutheran Service Book*, the newest hymnal of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In addition to his service at St. John, he served as the chairman of the Hymnody Committee for *Lutheran Service Book*, which was released in 2006.

The tune used for "We Praise You and Acknowledge You, O God" is called THAXTED, and was composed by Gustav Holst. This hymn tune originally began as the stately theme of the middle section of *Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity*, from Holst's suite *The Planets*, Op. 32. Holst called this tune Thaxted after the English village where he lived most of his life. He wrote *The Planets* between

1914-16, and adapted this tune from *Jupiter* in 1921 to fit the patriotic poem, "I Vow to Thee, My Country," by Cecil Spring Rice. The tune did not enter churchly use until 1926, when Holst's friend, Ralph Vaughan Williams, included it in his hymnal, *Songs of Praise*. Since then, it has been used across denominations for many different hymns.

As was said above, this hymn is based on the *Te Deum laudamus* (We praise You, O God). This hymn of praise, which is found in the Office of Matins, is of historic, but unknown, origin. Legend for many centuries claimed that it was spontaneously written by Sts. Ambrose (340-397) and Augustine (354-430) at Augustine's Baptism in 387. That legend claims that they spoke it in alternation, and wrote it down shortly thereafter. As inspiring as that legend may be, it is highly unlikely that it is true. Most modern research attributes its authorship to Nicetas, bishop of Remesia (335-414). Some modern scholars have also claimed that it has even more ancient roots, being derived from early Easter Vigil liturgies. Either way, its date of composition is likely to be found in the late fourth to early fifth centuries because it gives equal attention to the Father and the Son, confessing things about each that line up with the Church's fight at that time against Arianism, a heresy that denied the eternity of Christ and His status as the Son of God.

The arrangement of the *Te Deum* is based roughly on the Apostles' Creed, mixing a poetic vision of heaven with a declaration of faith. It immediately calls on the name of God and lists all those in heaven who give praise to God, as well as the Church throughout the world. The second section is creedal in nature, naming Christ and recalling His birth, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. It ends with a set of petitions, asking God that the Blood of Christ would cover us and guarantee our entrance into heaven. The last few stanzas, which many believe are a later addition derived from the Psalms, ask God to preserve us without sin and to keep us steadfast in the faith.

The *Te Deum* is an excellent hymn for all Christians to learn and love. It does what hymns ought to do: it praises God for His saving work in Christ, confesses the truth of who God is, and asks Him to preserve us in the faith until we stand with Him in glory everlasting.