

Fairest Lord Jesus!**~Other Speakers G-L: Hymn Stories:**

Text --From Munster Gesangbuch, 1677. 4th verse translated by Joseph A. Seiss, 1823-1904

Music --From Schlesische Volkslieder, 1842. Adapted by Richard S. Willis, 1819-1900

Tune Name --"Crusaders' Hymn"

"For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: All things were created by Him, and for Him." Colossians 1: 16

Little is known of the origin of this cherished hymn. Associated with it are several popular legends which cannot always be substantiated by research. One of the best-known accounts is that it was called the "Crusaders' Hymn. " Some think that it was sung by the twelfth century German Crusaders, especially by their children, as they made their long and wearisome trek to the Holy Land. Another account, which has more credence, is that it was one of the hymns used by the singing followers of John Hus, a small band of believers who settled in Silesia (now part of Poland) after they were driven out of Bohemia in the bloody anti-Reformation purge of 1620. This hymn, then, is generally said to be a folk song derived from these devout Silesian peasants.

The text for the hymn first appeared in the Roman Catholic Munster Gesangbuch of 1677, where it was published as the "first of three beautiful selected new hymns." Later it is said that a man by the name of Hoffman Fallersleben heard a group of Silesians singing the hymn in a service, recorded the words and music from this oral recitation, and published it in his Schlesische Volkslieder in 1842. This is the form in which we now know the hymn.

No one knows for certain who first translated the text from German into English. The English adaptation by Richard Storrs Willis, born in Boston, Massachusetts, on February 10, 1819, first appeared in his Church Chorals and Choir Studies in 1850. It is interesting to note that in this collection a notation about the origin of the hymn is made stating that it was "sung by the German knights on the way to Jerusalem." This statement undoubtedly did much to foster and popularize the Crusader account.

Richard Willis is also the composer of the Christmas carol "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear," (101 More Hymn Stories, No. 47).

The fourth verse, a fine translation by Joseph A. Seiss, emphasizes the dual nature of the Savior--"Son of God and Son of Man" as well as the praise that will be eternally His.

"God has created man in His own image and therefore God is creative by His very nature. Because of this, man also has communication and expression as a basic part of his humanity. The characteristic common to God and man is the desire to make things as well as to enjoy the creation about him. --Anonymous