



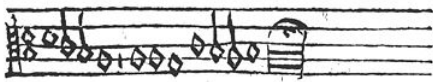
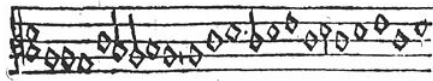
Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord

Text: Heinrich Held (1620-1659)

Tune: *Geistliches Gesangbüchlein*, Wittenberg, 1524

As the Church celebrates the Feasts of Christ, the important events in the life of Christ recorded for us in the Gospels, it is only natural that the hymnody for those times is held to a higher standard than the world's celebration of those days. These hymns teach not only the facts of those events, but the spiritual blessings and benefits of those holy days. "Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord" is one of those hymns. This hymn enjoys inclusion in a large number of hymnals in several denominations and languages. It truly is one of our best hymns for the Christmas season.

☩ Hymnus. Veni redemptor gentium.



☩ Man kom der Heyden heyland/der jungfrauen kynd erkannt. Das sich wunder alle welt / Gott solch gepurt yhm bestelt.
 Nicht von Adams blut noch von fleisch/allein vō dem heyligen geyst/ Ist Gottes wort worden eyn mensch/ vnd bluet eyn frucht weibs fleisch.
 Der jungfrau leib schwanger ward / doch bleib keuscheyt reyn bewaid / Lucht erfar māch tugēd schon / Gott da war yn seynem thron.
 Er gieng aus der kamer seyn-dem kōnglichen saal so reyn. Gott vō art vñ mensch eyn helle / seyn weg er zu lauffen eyllt.
 Seyn laufft kam vom vatter her/ vnd keret wider zum vater. fur hyn vndern zu der hell/ vnd wiber zu Gottes stuel.

☩ ij

NUN KOMM DER HEIDEN HEILAND in the 1524 Erfurt *Ein Enchiridion*.

Heinrich Held was born in Guhrau, Silesia (now Góra, Poland) in 1620. He studied law at several notable universities in the region, and eventually became a lawyer in his hometown. He was one of the best Silesian hymnwriters, living and writing in many of the same conditions as Paul Gerhardt, namely the affliction of the Thirty Years' War. His only remaining collection of poetry is his *Deutscher Gedichte Vortrab*, written while he was in Frankfurt à Oder in

1643. While only one hymn from that collection came into wide use, 18 of his hymns were included in Johann Crüger's *Praxis Pietatis Melica*. *The Lutheran Hymnal* includes two of Held's hymns, "Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord" and "Come, oh, Come, Thou Quickening Spirit."

This hymn has always been paired with the tune NUN KOMM DER HEIDEN HEILAND, the tune written for "Savior of the Nations, Come." This tune has been used by many denominations, but has long been a favorite of the Lutherans. It is one of the simplest Lutheran chorales, since it does not contain syncopation (moving notes off the beat), and because the first and fourth lines are identical, making it simple to learn. It was first published with Luther's German translation of "Savior of the Nations, Come" in 1524. It was also a favorite of J.S. Bach, seeing use in several compositions in his *Clavierübung* and *Orgelbüchlein*, as well as Cantatas 36 and 62.

"Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord" is perfect for Christmas and Epiphany because it perfectly summarizes the events of these holy days. Stanza two tells of the promise of the Messiah and the eager expectation of His coming which came to the Old Testament by the Prophets. However while this promise inspired the Prophets' hearts, He has now come to be the Help and Friend of sinners. Stanza three marks this as a good hymn for the Epiphany season because of its teaching that Christ is "of twofold race," namely He is fully man and fully God. We sinners pray that our Help and Friend would dwell within



"Bruise for me the Serpent's head..."

our heart to cleanse it from sin (stanza four) and that His bruising of the serpent's head would be made ours today (stanza eight). Christ's defeat of sin and Satan certainly comforts and gladdens us now and keeps us from falling into Satan's traps (stanza seven), but more than looking to a temporary relief from sin, we look to Christ's return to take us from Satan's tyranny forever (stanza nine). We eagerly await the day when we will forever be free by Christ's grace freely given us.