

# THE HYMNS WE SING: Songs of Thankfulness and Praise

Christopher Wordsworth, 1807-1885

Christopher Wordsworth, an Anglican priest in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, published 127 hymns in his life, seven of which we have in the Lutheran Hymnal. (Hymns: 9, 134, 218, 332, 443, 471, 493) He held that “the first duty of a hymn-writer to teach sound doctrine, and thus to save souls.” [The Handbook of the Lutheran Hymnal, p. 603]

Wordsworth wrote many hymns on the subject of the church year, including the one before us for the season of Epiphany: *Songs of Thankfulness and Praise*.

The season of Epiphany is about the manifesting of God's glory in the person of Jesus Christ. This theme of manifestation is very present in this hymn (the word 'manifest' appears eleven times in five verses). This hymn recounts many of the Bible texts that the church hears during the season of Epiphany.

The first verse recalls the visit of the wise men (or Magi) to the child Jesus. [St Matthew 2:1-12] These kings bow down to worship the King of Kings, praising Him as God and Lord.

The second verse recounts two events: Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River [St Matthew 3:13-17] and Jesus' first sign, the turning of water into wine at the wedding at Cana [St John 2:1-12]. In His baptism Jesus was anointed with the full measure of the Holy Spirit, and thus set apart to be the “Prophet, Priest, and King

supreme.”

**1. Songs of thankfulness and praise,  
Jesus, Lord, to Thee we raise,  
Manifested by the star  
To the sages from afar,  
Branch of royal David's stem,  
In Thy birth at Bethlehem.  
Anthems be to Thee addressed  
God in man made manifest.**

**2. Manifest at Jordan's stream,  
Prophet, Priest, and King supreme,  
And at Cana, Wedding-guest,  
In Thy Godhead manifest;  
Manifest in power divine,  
Changing water into wine.  
Anthems be to Thee addressed  
God in man made manifest.**

**3. Manifest in making whole  
Palsied limbs and fainting soul;  
Manifest in valiant fight,  
Quelling all the devil's might;  
Manifest in gracious will,  
Ever bringing good from ill.  
Anthems be to Thee addressed,  
God in man made manifest.**

**4. Sun and moon shall darkened be,  
Stars shall fall, the heavens shall flee;  
Christ will then like lightning shine,  
All will see His glorious sign;  
All will then the trumpet hear,  
All will see the Judge appear;  
Thou by all wilt be confessed,  
God in man made manifest.**

**5. Grant us grace to see Thee, Lord,  
Mirrored in Thy holy Word;  
May we imitate Thee now  
And be pure as pure art Thou  
That we like to Thee may be  
At Thy great Epiphany  
And may praise Thee, ever blest,  
God in man made manifest.**

*The Lutheran Hymnal, 134*

The third verse is a summary of all of the other miracles, signs and wonders that Jesus does in His earthly ministry. These miracles include healing the body [see St Matthew 8:1-13] as well as the despairing “fainting soul.” [See St Mark 2:1-12] Jesus also manifests His glory in resisting the devil and casting out demons. (This will also be a major theme in the Scriptures in the season of Lent.)

In the fourth verse the hymn changes from looking at the ways that Jesus *has* been manifest to the way that He *will be* manifest, namely His Second Coming when He returns in glory to judge the quick and the dead. Because Jesus has already been manifest to us in His love and grace through His death on the cross, we look forward to His final manifestation, not with fear, but with the hope of expectant children who await the return of a traveling father.

The fifth and final verse has a devotional character. In it we pray that the Lord would grant us His Holy Spirit, that we would see Him manifest through the words of the Holy Scriptures. We pray that believing His Holy Word, we would live lives according to it, all the while giving thanks to Him who is manifest to us as our gracious Friend and Savior. Amen.