

Anthem Notes for November 6, 2016

On God, and Not on Human Trust

Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706)

*On God, and not on human trust,
My earthly stand I've taken;
On him who made me out of dust
I build with faith unshaken;
I trust His hands Who understands,
For all that He bestoweth
Is good, as He best knoweth.*

On this 65th Anniversary of the founding of Northminster, the choir is singing a text that can be said to have been foundational to Northminster's ministry—a statement of positive faith: “On God, and not on human trust, My earthly stand I've taken.” Trusting faithfully him who understands. . . in all the circumstances of our lives. Perhaps the author had Psalm 118:9 in mind: “It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.” (King James Version) or even Psalm 46, which declares that God is our refuge and strength upon whom we can rely in time of trouble.

Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715-1769), who penned the text, wrote to raise spiritual and moral values, employing language which was always clear. His emphasis on simplicity and heartfelt expression made him one of Germany's literary and spiritual arbiters and he became one of the most popular of German authors. Goethe was one of his students. His spiritual songs, such as this, were received by Catholics and Protestants with equal favor.

The music was composed by Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706), important German organist and composer of Protestant church music. The chorale (hymn) melody is heard unadorned in long-note values sung by the sopranos as a *cantus firmus* (a fixed melody) with the three lower voices set in contrapuntal (imitative) style. Each phrase of the chorale is introduced by a short fugue-like (imitative) figure. The text and music was arranged by Matthew N. Lundquist and was copyrighted by Concordia Publishing House in 1950.



Johann Pachelbel

Pachelbel composed much organ music, including a series of organ chorales, based on well-known Lutheran hymn-tunes. Other organ music includes works in forms later used by Bach—fugues, toccatas, fantasias and a set of six chaconnes (a popular

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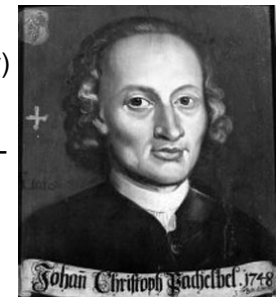
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compositional form popular in the Baroque era). Although Pachelbel established his reputation as organist, composer, and teacher at the Protestant *Predigerkirche* at Erfurt, he is best known today for his very popular *Canon in D Major*.

At Erfurt, he became a close friend of the town's most prominent musician, Johann Ambrosius Bach, who was to become the father of Johann Sebastian. He undertook the musical education of the young Johann Christoph who would later teach his brother Johann Sebastian all he knew when the latter came to live with his family following the death of their parents.

A few more words about Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, poet and novelist. He was a prominent representative of the German Enlightenment and his works were, for a time, second in popularity only to the Bible.



Christian Gellert

The son of a pastor, Gellert was reared in a poor and extremely pious family. After working as a tutor, he studied at the University of Leipzig, where he became a *Privatdozent* (unsalaried lecturer) in 1745 and a professor in 1751. Popular both for his work and for his personality, his lectures on poetry, rhetoric, and ethics were exceptionally well attended.

Gellert was best known for his *Fabeln und Erzählungen* (1746–48; “Fables and Tales”), a collection of naïvely realistic fables and moralizing stories charming for their directness and simplicity. Equally popular was his “Spiritual Odes and Songs,” poems and hymns that combined faith with the rationalism of the Enlightenment. The most famous of these, “The Heavens Praise the Eternal Glories” and “The Glory of God in Nature,” were later set to music by Beethoven and still appear in hymnbooks.

The choir's hope is that this statement of faith touches your heart, blessing you in such a way that you carry it with you long after you leave worship today.

God is our Refuge and our Strength

Psalm 46

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