Ah, Holy Jesus   *Herzliebster Jesu*
Johann Crüger (1568-1662), arr. Hal Hopson

Ah, holy Jesus, how have you offended,
That mortal judgment has on you descended?
By foes derided, by your own rejected,
O most afflicted!
Miserere nobis. Miserere nobis. Miserere nobis.

Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon you?
It is my treason, Lord, that has undone you.
'Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied you;
I crucified you.

Miserere nobis. I crucified you.

With imagery from Isaiah 53 and other Bible passages, the text sets forth the doctrine of Christ's atonement: that Christ died for the sin of the world in a substitutionary death on the cross. A striking aspect of the text is its personalization: it was for <u>my</u> sin that Christ died!

Johann Heermann (1585-1647), ordained a Lutheran pastor in 1611, wrote this text during the misery of the Thirty Years' War (1618-48). The original hymn has fifteen stanzas. Hal Hopson, arranger, has set only the first two. Although Heermann's ministry was interrupted several times during the Thirty Years' War and he experienced personal loss and tragedy during those devastating times, he wrote many of his hymns and poems during the war. His own suffering and family tragedy led him to meditate on Christ's undeserved suffering. Yet, his personal faith and trust in God continued to be reflected in the strong faith of his texts. He is judged to be the finest hymn writer in the era between Martin Luther (1483-1546) and Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676).

Johann Heermann
(1585-1647
Pastor & hymnist

Two more of the stanzas of this beautiful Passiontide hymn, translated from German by Robert Bridges in 1899, can be found in our blue hymnal on page 93.

Composer Johann Crüger, son of an innkeeper, became one of the most distinguished musicians of this era, composing more than 70 chorales (hymn tunes). The tune for *Ah, Holy Jesus*, also called *Herzliebster Jesu*, was composed ten years after Heermann wrote the text and it became one of Crüger's most well-known chorale

tunes, having been set many times by J. S. Bach and Johannes Brahms as well as others.

Educated at a Jesuit College and trained in music and theology, in 1622, Crüger became the cantor of St. Nicholas Church in Berlin and taught at the Gymnasium of the Grey Friars. He held both posts until his death in 1662.

Johann Crüger

Crüger, too, was affected by The Thirty Years' War which curtailed his compositional output. He actively promoted congregational singing and composed elaborate instrumental accompaniments for hymns. His treatise *Praxis pietatis melica* was considered the most important contribution to the field of hymnody in the 17th century.

Arranger Hal Hopson (b. 1933) has created a moving anthem in which the chorale is accompanied by austere low octaves throughout the entire piece suggesting the stripes and cruelty laid on Jesus while dying on the cross. They are played throughout with a sense of inexplicable mystery and with a somewhat harsh accent in contrast to the quieter, more sustained quality of the vocal parts. In addition to the low octaves, Hopson adds a soprano descant to the second verse. The Latin phrase "Miserere nobis" means 'have mercy upon us.'   Altogether, the arrangement creates a deeply emotional setting for this profound text.

Hal Hopson (b. 1933), is one of the most prolific composers of church music of his generation. With more than 1,800 published works, his music is heard weekly in congregations throughout our country. His compositions reflect respect for the best liturgical tradition, scripture, and theology. He composes music accessible to nearly all choirs and congregations and his published repertoire includes almost all genres.

Hal Hopson

An active church musician throughout his professional life, he has also been conductor-clinician for countless workshops and choral festivals and served as professor of church music at Westminster Choir College and Scarritt Graduate School.