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It is entitled: Between the Jammertal and the Freudensaal: the Existential Apocalypticism of Paul Gerhardt (1607-76)

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Between the Jammertal and the Freudensaal:
the Existential Apocalypticism of Paul Gerhardt (1607-76)

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Between the Jammertal and the Freudensaal: 
The Existential Apocalypticism of Paul Gerhardt (1607-76)

Early Modern Germany has been noted as the most apocalyptic time period in Western Tradition. Although a prominent historical and literary figure of this time period, Lutheran hymnist, Paul Gerhardt (1607-76), has not been explored by scholars with eschatology in mind. This thesis uses apocalyptic literary tradition as a lens to interpret six of his hymns. Before offering discussing the content of these hymns, however, I establish Paul Gerhardt within the context of Early Modern apocalypticism as well as within his literary genre, the German Kirchenlied tradition. The various interpretations that follow revolve around three questions concerning Gerhardt and apocalyptic tradition. First, what did Gerhardt say about the apocalypse? Second, how or to what ends did he engage the topic? Third, why did he portray apocalypticism the way he did?

Gerhardt expresses apocalyptic expectation in his work, but his apocalypticism is as concerned with the temporal present as it is with the eternal future. In his hymns, Gerhardt creates a mediating landscape between the Jammertal and Freudensaal; his hymns do not define earthly life as a Jammertal void of joy or peace nor is heaven defined as a divine Freudensaal divorced of earthly reality. Rather, a degree of earthly peace and joy is possible alongside great sorrow, and that one’s conception of heaven is marked by earthly symbols of true Home, Sustenance and Peace. In a world approaching its end, Gerhardt portrays the apocalypse as a means to navigate himself and his fellow man on the journey between the Jammertal and the Freudensaal.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Number</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>Cover page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-69</td>
<td>Thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Appendix 1: Rubric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Appendix 2: Kometenflugblatt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72-77</td>
<td>Appendix 3: the 6 Gerhardt hymns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74-78</td>
<td>Bibliography</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Title page of Ebeling’s 1666/67 edition of Gerhardt’s hymns, the first compilation of solely Gerhardt hymns.
In a cultural climate fraught with eschatological expectation, Martin Luther was famously claimed to have said: “Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would end, I would nonetheless plant my little apple tree today.” This quote addresses the existential duty inherent to a Lutheran, apocalyptic worldview. For Luther, it was important to continue carrying out the tasks of this life, even planting seeds for the future—come rain, shine the Turks, the pope, or even the blood-colored moon of the Revelations of St. John. This endeavor mandates human activity in this earthly life, a refusal to view chaos and catastrophe as the determining forces governing life on earth. In a world quickly going asunder, one ought not to become passive but rather should remain active in the tasks of this world, planting seeds by living according to God’s word.

Popular Lutheran hymnist Paul Gerhardt (1607-76) planted his own seeds in the form of over a hundred German hymns. Like the seed of an apple tree that bears fruit not today but tomorrow, Gerhardt wrote poems intended not to seek a public audience but to seek a congregation. His 134 hymns—more numerous than any other Lutheran writer with the exception of Luther himself—grapple with the relationship between the suffering of human life on the one hand and an anticipation of the hereafter and eternal peace on the other. Though his hymns are often discussed in terms of their longing for heaven, his hymns also denote a much more complex relationship between earth and heaven, between the Jammertal and the Freudensaal—a relationship that is marked not only with sin and sorrow but also with earthly senses of home, sustenance and peace. This complexity is especially illuminated when

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2 Und wenn ich wüßte, daß morgen die Welt unterginge, so würde ich doch heute mein Apfelbäumchen pflanzen.
3 Although it is not what Luther was originally referring to, by the time Gerhardt became to write his poems, the symbolic connection between planting trees and writing poetry had long been established, especially by the largest poetic society, the Fruchtbbringende Gesellschaft, whose members each received emblems of various types of trees.
4 D. Wilhelm Nelle, Geschichte des deutschen evangelischen Kirchenliedes, (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1962), 159
discussing the apocalyptic aspects of his works, a facet of Gerhardt’s writings that until now remains unexplored in scholarship. Gerhardt’s apocalypticism ultimately serves pedagogical and consolatory purposes, whose motivation is to encourage a moral and spiritual improvement for the future.

I. Early Modern Apocalypticism in Context

Although apocalypticism itself was not a new social movement in Early Modern Europe but finds its roots in Jewish Apocalypticism,¹ Luther’s Reformation² and the generations following it were greatly guided by an apocalyptic fervor of unprecedented proportions:

“Luther’s Reformation, in appropriating and imaginatively reconstructing the prophetic worldview, actually reinforced an inherited sense of expectancy and helped produce […] a level of apocalyptic expectation that finds few parallels in Western History.”³

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¹ While the term “apocalypse,” or “revelation,” was not used until the Revelation of St. John, Apokálypsis Iōánnou, the apocalyptic tradition dates back to the story of 1 Enoch, a non-canonical account of Enoch’s ascent into heaven (c. 300s B.C.). The emergence of apocalyptic texts continues with portions of Jewish scripture, especially Daniel (2nd Century B.C.), as well as Hellenistic manuscripts including the Third Sybiline Oracle (1st Century B.C.). Another wave of apocalyptic texts came after the Jewish revolt against the Romans (66 B.C.), the most notable of which is 4 Ezra, written in the last decade of the first century. After the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, Jewish apocalypticism was taken up by early Christians, who expected the imminent return of Christ. Ernst Käsemann refers to eschatological expectation as the “Mother of all Christian theology. Apocalyptic literature continues with canonical biblical texts of St. John’s Revelations, St. Stephen’s vision in Acts 7, and several passages in the synoptic gospels. (For more information regarding Jewish and early Christian apocalypticism, see: John J. Collins, The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1984); and: Ernst Käsemann. “The Beginnings of Christian Theology,” Journal for Theology and the Church, v. 6, 1969, 17-46).

² Heiko A. Oberman’s pivotal work on the life of Luther firmly establishes the eschatological backdrop of Luther’s worldview: “To understand Luther, we must read the history of his life from an unconventional perspective. It is history ‘sub specie aeternitatis,’ in the light of eternity; not in the mild glow of constant progress toward Heaven, but in the shadow of the chaos of the Last Days and the imminence of eternity” (12). Luther’s view that the world and the Church were entering their Last Days was an integral part of his concept of the Reformation: “Three years before posting his theses, Luther had already come to regard the sale of indulgences as proof of the grievous extent to which the Church had gone astray. […] He found the signs of the Last Days spelled out with precision in St. Matthew’s Gospel. […] From the very start it was clear to Luther that Jesus’ prophecy of the Last Days fully applied to the situation of the Church in his time” (Heiko Oberman, Luther: Man Between God and Devil, (New York: Image Books Doubleday, 1989), 70).

Apocalypticism in Early Modern Germany has received increasing attention among historical and literary scholars of the 20\textsuperscript{th}-century. Norman Cohn’s *Pursuit of the Millennium* forms the bedrock of 20\textsuperscript{th} century thinking on Early Modern apocalypticism, exploring the connection between social hardship and the creation of paradisiacal, apocalyptic myths. Occurring alongside the upswing of Protestant spirituality were a host of darker societal dynamics: a doubling of European population between 1450-1650; scarcity of food and inflation of prices;\textsuperscript{1} meteorological fluctuations including a mini ice-age; reports of astrological signs and portents; witch-hunting; religious sectarianism; and, especially, a series of brutal clashes and societal upheavals, culminating in the worst war *per capita* ever fought on German soil: the Thirty Years’ War (1618-48).	extsuperscript{2} While such social factors were in and of themselves not unique, the culmination of these factors in such a condensed period of time created an atmosphere of distinctive social pressure and tension. According to Cohn, apocalyptic expectation arose at various times throughout European history as a reflection of the “desire of the poor to improve the material conditions of their lives […] with phantasies [sic] of a new Paradise on earth, a world purged of suffering and sin, a Kingdom of the Saints.”\textsuperscript{3} Cohn views apocalypticism through the lens of Revolution, citing the role of utopian, eschatological imagination in social uprising by validating a collective sense of discontentment among oppressed classes—even evidenced by totalitarian regimes of modernity.\textsuperscript{4} This view, though acknowledging the potential power of apocalypticism, does not lend credence to the complexity of Reformation apocalypticism. For some groups, such as the Anabaptists, apocalyptic fervor may have led to forms of social uprising. Missing in Cohn’s assessment is the centrality of Lutheran

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\textsuperscript{1} A. Lloyd Moote, *The Seventeenth Century: Europe in Ferment*, (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1970), 4

\textsuperscript{2} Max Reinhart, ed. “Introduction: German Literature in the Early Modern Period,” in *Early Modern German Literature 1350-1700*, (Rochester: Camden House, 2007), xii


\textsuperscript{4} Cohn’s most famous assertion was his correlation between the utopian imagination of apocalyptic dissenters in pre-modernity with the utopian visions of modern totalitarian regimes, namely the Nazis (Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, 308).
apocalypticism, which was not only more widespread than in any other confession, but also went through various phases and changes in the way eschatology was expressed.

Andrew Cunningham and Ole Peter Grell’s *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* view apocalypticism through another sort of lens, that of “crisis.” Cunningham and Grell thematically structure a broad and far-reaching survey of Early Modern apocalypticism around the four horsemen mentioned in St. John’s *Revelations*: Revelation (the White Horseman), War (Red), Famine (Black), and Disease (Pale). Through this discussion the various crises of the Early Modern age become evident, and thus the development of apocalypticism correlates to these crises. The “preoccupation with the end of the world, the end of time, and the arrival of the thousand-year kingdom of Christ was rooted in the deep religious, social, political, economic, and demographic crises of the time.”¹ Accordingly, Cunningham and Grell, surmise that apocalypticism climaxes during the Thirty Years’ War and begins its final descent only after the *Peace of Westphalia* (1648) affords peace to the Catholics and Protestants, bringing an end to the social crises of the 17th century.²

Once again, although Cunningham and Grell do much to engage the depth of the Early Modern apocalyptic spirit, the direct correlation between apocalypticism and crisis begs several questions when viewed in relation to German Lutheran apocalypticism. Theodore K. Rabb questions the application of “crisis” as the traditional lens of viewing Early Modern Europe, asserting that the era was not an all-encompassing crisis like the “religious, social, political, economic and demographic crisis” of Cunningham and Grell, but rather more narrowly a crisis of authority. This crisis began to find resolution only in the last third of the 17th century,³ since the Peace of Westphalia (1648) did not solve all the social problems caused by the war.⁴ Lutheran

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¹ Andrew Cunningham and Ole Peter Grell, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Religion, War, Famine, and Death in Reformation Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1  
² Ibid., 323  
⁴ Though it offered nominal protection to Christians living in minority and outlined new territorial boundaries, it took many communities and territories decades to rebuild not only the destruction of war but also the plague epidemics that persisted
apocalypticism does not follow this pattern, but rather begins to wane in intensity already during the first decade of the Thirty Years’ War.

Early Modern apocalypticism was not merely a movement serving a revolutionary function, nor was it simply a reaction to crisis. Certainly, these aspects are important contexts to keep in mind. However it was not a social movement at all but rather an all-encompassing worldview—with many aspects and sinews. The task, then, is to articulate a view which engages the complexity of Early Modern apocalypticism. This task is most aptly accomplished in Robert Bruce Barnes’ *Prophecy and Gnosis*, which views the social and religious worldview from a wide range of contemporary views and fields, including theology, astronomy and literature. In doing so, Barnes notes some of the movement’s nuanced complexities and establishes two interrelated elements of the apocalyptic mindset: the avenue of prophecy (warning and consolation) and gnosis (discovery, insight, and calculated predictions). Prophecy, here, refers to the Biblical function of a prophet—not necessarily to predict the future, but rather to be a minister of God in order that man may be admonished of his the sins and consoled by the mercy of God through repentance. Gnosis pertains to the insight that enables a select person or group to have secret knowledge of future events, including dates and times.

Importantly, Barnes lends insight to the central role that Lutheranism played in shaping apocalypticism during this era. Not only was Germany inundated with the most intense apocalypticism of all of Europe,¹ the role of Lutheranism in this apocalypticism remained central from the first years of the Reformation:

> In no other major confessional group of the sixteenth century did late medieval eschatological tensions remain so persistent and so broadly influential […]

Lutheranism was the only major confession of the Reformation era to give a

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¹ Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 5
clear, virtually doctrinal sanction to a powerful sense of eschatological expectancy.¹

And yet, despite the correlation between Lutheranism and anticipation of the End Days, even Lutheran apocalypticism sees changes and developments throughout the centuries of the Reformation and post-Reformation age. Apocalypticism did not peak during the Thirty Years’ War—as Cunningham and Grell surmise—but earlier, at the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th centuries. At this time, apocalypticism was expressed in much more explicit, Gnostic predictions than at any other time. During the Thirty Years’ War, then, this bold apocalypticism changed to a more subdued one, divorced from Lutheran concepts of historical divination and guided much more by Prophetic motivations.² This development created an eschatology in which apocalypticism could persist inasmuch as reality served to exhort and console humans. At the same time, the Gnostic aspects of apocalypticism increasingly fell away as the narrative of past and future were less able to be calculated with predictions and divinations.

While the field of Early Modern apocalypticism is slowly expanding, however, one of the most important literary and religious figures of the 17th century, Paul Gerhardt (1607-76), has not yet been explored with eschatological expectation in mind. This thesis uses apocalyptic literary tradition as a lens to interpret six of his hymns. The various interpretations offered in this thesis revolve around three questions concerning Gerhardt and apocalyptic tradition. First, what did Gerhardt say about the apocalypse? Second, how or to what ends did he engage the topic? Third, why did he portray apocalypticism the way he did?

As the interpretations of the hymns will demonstrate, Gerhardt expresses apocalyptic expectation in his work, but that his apocalypticism is equally concerned

¹ Barnes, Prophecy and Gnosis, 2
² Ibid., 257
with the temporal present as it is with the eternal future. In his hymns, Gerhardt creates a mediating landscape between the Jammertal and Freudensaal; that his hymns do not define earthly life as a Jammertal void of joy or peace nor is heaven defined as a divine Freudensaal divorced of earthly reality. Rather, a degree of earthly peace and joy is possible alongside great sorrow, and that one’s conception of heaven is marked by earthly notions of true home, sustenance and peace.

The few writings that exist from Gerhardt outside of his more literary pursuits (134 German Kirchenlieder and 15 Latin poems) include 4 funeral sermons, 1 letter and his final will and testament.¹ The best indicator in analyzing his apocalyptic leanings is his hymns. Yet in order to analyze them in light of apocalypticism it is first necessary to contextualize Gerhardt within his genre: the German Protestant Kirchenlied.

II. Kirchenlied: the Genre of Paul Gerhardt

The German Kirchenlied reflects the cultural developments during the 17th century and Thirty Years’ War. The spiritual, literary and social role of the hymn provides an important vehicle for scholars of many fields in understanding the cultural development of Germany during this century and beyond.² It is also helpful in analyzing German literature beyond the Early Modern period, since many authors’ poetic language and perspective have been shaped both actively and passively by hymns.³

German hymnology finds its origins both in medieval Volkslied tradition as well as in pre-Reformation Catholic liturgical practice. Many hymns contain stylistic elements of the German folk song including inner rhymes, alliteration and composite stanzas of all kinds.⁴ Prior to the

² A. H. Hoffman von Fallersleben, Geschichte des deutschen Kirchenliedes. (Hildesheim, Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1965), iii
⁴ Curt von Faber du Faur, German Baroque Literature: A Catalogue in the Collection of the Yale University Library. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 126-7
Reformation, choirs were composed of monks and laypeople generally did not take active part in singing. Congregants nonetheless found opportunity to sing during special services such as feast and holy days as well as funeral and wedding masses, which often times included short communal songs sometimes in the vernacular.¹

The Protestant Reformation provided a more central venue for the Kirchenlied. Luther and Melanchthon found it vital for all singing to be an active part of all spheres of human life: the public community, the Church and at home.² Hymns were adopted by Luther to accompany the sermon as a further means of pedagogy.³ From the beginning of Protestantism, songs were recognized as fulfilling “eine wichtige theologisch-kommunikative und pädagogische Aufgabe: gemeinsames Hören der Predigt des Evangeliums und gemeinsames Singen der Lieder.”⁴

With the exception of the Reformation itself, no single time—past or present—was more significant for this genre than the 17th century, namely the Thirty Years’ War (1618-48) and the years that followed: “Die Zeit des Krieges behauptet für die Dichtung […] nicht bloß einen Niedergang, sondern einen Aufschwung [sic].”⁵

This Blütezeit⁶ of the German Kirchenlied was paved on the one hand by material scarcity, as well as by an abundance of poetic and spiritual resources on the other. The war provided for conditions of poverty that directly influenced the genre: the destruction of churches and organs as well as the cost it took to maintain traditional instruments meant a decrease or

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¹ F.A. Cunz, Geschichte des deutschen Kirchenliedes vom 16. Jahrhundert bis auf unserer Zeit, (Wiesbaden: Dr. Martin Sändig 1969), 11
³ Luther was of course not the first to recognize the pedagogical function of hymns and song. Aristotle, too, recognized the influential role of music in shaping minds in his Politics. According to Aristotle, the study of had originally been a part of the traditional mathematical quadrivium. It was not until the Reformation, however, that the study of music became a widespread component of the liberal arts and sciences curriculum in Germany (Ibid., 204-205).
⁴ Martin Petzoldt, “Akzente der Theologie Paul Gerhards nach seinen Liedern.” In „In Traurigkeit mein Lachen... In Einsamkeit mein Sprachgesell.” Das evangelische Kirchenlied am Beispiel Paul Gerhards aus interdisziplinär Perspektiv, Ulla Fix, ed., (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2008), 41
⁵ D. Wilhelm Nelle, Geschichte des deutschen evangelischen Kirchenliedes. (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1962), 100
⁶ Paul Dorsch, Das deutsche evangelische Kirchenlied in Geschichtsbildern, (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1928), 3
complete disappearance of instrumental accompaniment in choral songs. Also, many churches were unable to continually provide written Stiftmusik or print new music that was written during the war, until the early 1650s.¹

Alongside this material dearth was an overflow of literary and religious creativity. Whereas other forms of literature may have seen a decreasing reception due to a decreased literacy rate during the disruption of war, the Kirchenlied was often disseminated not only in written sources, Gesangbücher, but especially during the war was disseminated orally. Opitz’s 1617 Buch der deutschen Poeterey had been published just before the war, evoking in lyrical genres a new sense of creativity and license with the German language. Even during the war, the Kirchenlied experienced a flowering and maturation in form, language, style and content. The authors of this genre at the time included canonical German writers, such as Gryphius, Rist, Fleming, Rinckart and Heermann. In the language and meter of their hymns, one begins to hear afresh the “tongerechten, glattfließenden Stanza” and how “pünktlich wechseln betonte und unbetonte Silben” in comparison to the more raw, folkish language of Luther’s hymns.²

Many of these authors were also involved in other literary endeavors of the Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft. Although Gerhardt was not a member of this group, the Gesellschaft was a prominent force throughout the 17th century, cultivating literary and cultural fruitfulness throughout the war and other harrowing events. Also called the Palmenorden, this group selected as its emblem the palm-tree due to its usefulness and fruitfulness.

Though not yet bearing the same self- and emotional-awareness that would follow in 18th century Pietism, one notes at this time nonetheless an increasing use of the “ich” as opposed to the communal “wir.”³ Additionally, intentions of Kirchenlieder shifted increasingly towards a two-fold purpose of edification and consolation, Buße und Erbauung.⁴ This theme is paralleled

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¹Ibid.
² Nelle Geschichte des deutschen evangelischen Kirchenliedes, 102
³ Nelle Geschichte des deutschen evangelischen Kirchenliedes, 106
⁴ Hans Georg Kemper, „Das lutherische Kirchenlied in der Krisen-Zeit des frühen 17. Jahrhunderts.“ Das
in portrayals of God’s punishment of mankind alongside His mercy; the wrath of nature and storms versus the merciful rays of the morning sun; and the call for repentance versus the reminder of love and goodness.

Few figures play a greater role in this genre than Paul Gerhardt. Aside from Luther, Gerhardt’s hymns have had the most widespread and longest lasting impact on German Kirchenlied tradition. Gerhardt’s poesy presents on the one hand a language uncluttered by rhetorical formulas, a “Sprache ohne alle Kunst.” On the other hand, his works portray a freshly creative and poetic synthesis of familiar topics to Protestantism such as: justification by faith, a longing for the “eternal Heimat,” the centrality of hell and man’s sins, and lyrical dialogues not only with the written Word, but also with the “Book of Nature.” Gerhardt’s emphasis on both inner spirituality as well as outward reality strikes “a balance between man’s inner life and the visible world around him.” His hymns, which he wrote as poetry, were set to music by working with church musicians Johann Crüger (1598-1662) and Johann Georg Ebeling (1637-1676) at Berlin’s Nikolaikirche.

By the end of his life, Gerhardt’s works were relatively well known with a widely-read (or sung) reception. This, as well as the fact that many of his 134 hymns and poems continue to be published in German Gesangbücher, provides for a reception that rivals that of Goethe and

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1 Krummacher, “Paul Gerhardt”, 271


3 Nelle, *Geschichte des deutschen evangelischen Kirchenliedes*, 145

4Ibid., 140-1

5 Ludwig Stockinger, „Barocklyrick, die immer noch verstanden wird.” In „Traurigkeit mein Lachen... Einsamkeit mein Sprachgesell.” *Das evangelische Kirchenlied am Beispiel Paul Gerhardt’s aus interdisziplinär Perspektiv*, Ulla Fix, ed., (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2008), 96

6 Henry and Mary Garland, eds., *Oxford Companion to German Literature*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 275
Walther von der Vogelweide. The role of Gerhardt the poet both in his time and throughout subsequent generations of German protestants cannot be underestimated:

Paul Gerhardt is surely the greatest writer of religious poetry, indeed one of the greatest poets of his century. He employs the poetic style created by Opitz with ease and assurance. [...] His songs have thus become the indestructible possession of the Evangelical portion of the German nation; every child has grown up with them, and they impress themselves on one’s memory so well that they can never be forgotten. [...] Undoubtedly he was instrumental in bringing the Lutheran teaching of his time [...] into closer contact with daily life.  

In this way Gerhardt greatly influenced both the literary and socioreligious contexts of German culture.

Yet along with the immense poetic heritage left behind by Gerhardt, there exist several crucial problems in undertaking analyses of Gerhardt’s works. Unlike Goethe or Walther, there is no modern, definitive historical-critical edition of Gerhardt’s work. The problematics of creating such an edition lay partially in a reality which will also present itself in various ways during this thesis: the lag between writing hymns and, their printing during and after the Thirty Years’ War. Additionally, there is little subtext or autobiographical statements from Gerhardt to aid in contextualizing his work, with the exception of several letters, funeral sermons and his

1 Sebastian Schmideler, „Einige Bemerkungen zu einer neuen historisch-kritischen Paul-Gerhardt-Ausgabe.“ In „In Traurigkeit mein Lachen... In Einsamkeit mein Sprachgesell.“ Das evangelische Kirchenlied am Beispiel Paul Gerhardts aus interdisziplinär Perspektiv, Ulla Fix, ed., (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2008), 15
2 Faber du Faur, German Baroque Literature, 126-27
3 This phenomenon was formally recognized by literary scholars on the 400th anniversary of Gerhardt’s birthday in 2007 as the “Treppenwitz der Germanistik” (Schmideler 2008, 15). The critical edition used for this thesis is a 1957 edition by Eberhard von Cranach-Sichart, Paul Gerhardt: Dichtungen und Schriften, which contains all of Gerhardt’s texts, sermons and letters with minimal commentary or revision.
final will and testament. The majority of his hymns were published late in his life, compiled by church musician Johann Ebeling, and often within vast hymn collections with other authors. ¹

Yet, given the challenges in analyzing the hymns of Gerhardt, the contributions his hymns have made to German literary culture warrant new analyses of his work. Gerhardt’s notions of the apocalypse provide the possibility for fresh insights into Gerhardt’s conceptions of heaven, earth, temporality and eternity.

III. Analyzing Hymns in View of Apocalypticism: A Method

In view of the dearth of subtext offered by Gerhardt in which to contextualize his hymns, interpretation of his poems is a risky task, prone to making assumptions or judgments by taking lines and stanzas out of context. With this in mind, an attempt was made to balance individual interpretations of his hymns while also viewing them in dialogue with one another and with the entirety of Gerhardt’s oeuvre. In investigating the 134 German hymns of Gerhardt and deciding which works would be most suitable to explore in the context of the apocalyptic, I developed a rubric of commonalities to apocalyptic literature and texts, drawn both from scholars of Early Modern culture as well as from scholars of ancient Jewish apocalyptic texts. There are three categories in the rubric:

(1) **Societal/ Human Conditions:** Factors outside of literary aspects that may be described in the work. Under this category fall issues such as persecution, social powerlessness, trauma, war, trauma, inevitability of death, famine, sickness, degeneration (either in the natural world or a moral degeneration in humanity).

(2) **Literary Features:** Specific devices, verbal moods or voices, or the way the work is framed. Under this category fall factors such as: somehow framing

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¹ These compilations include: *Praxis Pietatis Melica* (1647) [Compiled and set to music by Johann Crüger and contains 18 Gerhardt hymns]; *10th Edition of Praxis* (1661) [Contains 95 Gerhardt hymns, also published and set to music by Crüger]; *Pauli Gerhardi Geistliche Andachten* (1666) [contains all of Gerhardt’s , the new editions were set to music by Johann Georg Ebeling].
the work as a divine revelation, the fear of divine reversal (i.e. the withdrawal of God’s spirit or blessing from a specific people group), morally action-guiding tones such as imperatives and exhortation, and, finally, consolation.

(3) Literary Themes: general themes, figures or motifs that occur in the work.

Under this category would fall: a messiah figure, second coming of Christ, a final judgment, resurrection of the dead, rebirth of paradise or nature.

Works were then selected which generally appeared to possess at least several traits from all three categories. In Appendix I, this rubric has been included in table format as a cross-reference of the hymns and their eschatological elements. In this table I included items, such as Final Judgment, to which I found no direct references to in what I would consider Gerhardt’s most explicitly apocalyptic hymns. The absence of certain aspects central to an apocalyptic worldview offer just as much insight into Gerhardt’s eschatology as the items he does speak of, a trend further explored in the conclusion. The above rubric, however, proved helpful not only in selecting hymns to interpret, but also in knowing what to emphasize and highlight throughout the interpretation process.

A final factor in text selection was the desire to choose hymns that also had enough substance in common so as to stand in dialogue with one another, demonstrating patterns, comparisons and contradictions in the way that Gerhardt engaged apocalyptic language and expectation. The hymns are organized not only chronologically, but to a certain extent thematically.

Up to this point, several topics have been discussed in order to contextualize the hymns that will be interpreted shortly. Lutheranism and the Lutheran Reformation played a pivotal role in shaping Early Modern apocalypticism, which reached its peak in the early part of the Thirty
Years’ War but persisted into the later decades of the 17th Century. Similarly, the Kirchenlied tradition has been established as playing a central role in Protestant culture at the time as well as within German literary history. Gerhardt as an important historical and literary figure during this time period warrants a closer look at his engagement of apocalypticism:

1.) Knowing the prevalence of apocalyptic thought in the Lutheran worldview since the Reformation, what, if anything, does Gerhardt have to offer on the subject of the Apocalypse?

2.) How does his apocalypticism fit into the wider social currents of Early Modern Germany? What are the literary and historical influences at work?

3.) Finally, why does he address the apocalypse the way he does? What is the uniqueness of this expression?

These questions will serve in guiding the discussion to appropriate and assess apocalyptic elements found in Gerhardt’s writing.

IV. The Apocalypticism of Gerhardt as Explored in Six Hymns

The following interpretations are organized both chronologically—contextualized by Gerhardt’s biographical progression—as well as thematically. Such an approach offers a multi-faceted analysis of Gerhardt’s engagement of the Last Days, while also highlighting a progression and development in Gerhardt’s expression. First, two Danklieder from the early portion of Gerhardt’s oeuvre are analyzed, whose topics revolve around the Thirty Years’ War: “Dankgebet in Kriegeszeiten” (1653) and “Danklied für die Verkündigung des Friedens” (1653-)

1 See Appendix 3 for the hymn texts, where they are printed in the order discussed in this paper.
66). Second, two *Kometenlieder* published after the war demonstrate two different ways in which Gerhardt used celestial signs to address the existential dilemma of how one ought to live in a world that appears to be disintegrating: “Die Zeit ist nunmehr nah” (1656) and “Herr was hast du im Sinn?” (1666). Lastly, two poems from the latter part of Gerhardt’s life illustrate the hope that eternity affords in a world that is increasingly saturated with sin: “Herrschter in dem Himmelszelt” (1666) and “Johannes sahe durch Gesicht ein edles Licht” (1666).

a. “Dankgebet in Kriegeszeiten” (1653) & “Danklied für die Verkündigung des Friedens” (1653/56)

When Paul Gerhardt was born (1607), he entered a world that was characterized by the uncertainty and brutality of political and religious conflict. The village of his birth, Gräfenhainichen in Saxony, was located in an area that had long been a stage for confessional tensions and violence. By the time the war broke out, Gerhardt had traveled south to Grimma in order to attend secondary school. Even sheltered by the confines of the Fürstenschule St. Augustin, however, Gerhardt experienced the threat of violence and the hardships of war, especially inflation, food shortages and disease. Yet from a young age Gerhardt demonstrated a proclivity for spiritual devotion as well as a longsuffering spirit in the face of trials; when the school temporarily shut down its normal programs due to insufficient food and the spread of sickness, Gerhardt was one of the few students who remained on campus and continued his studies through the 1626-27 school year, going on to study theology at the bastion of Lutheran Protestantism, Wittenberg. There, he would endure the scourge of war, the complete burning of Gräfenhainichen (1637), the burning of Wittenberg (1640), and the persistent spread of disease
and famine.\textsuperscript{1} The ubiquitous tensions and uncertainties that were a normal part of Gerhardt’s early life “haben ihn weiter sein ganzes Leben hindurch bis zum Abend wie ein treuer Schatten begleitet.”\textsuperscript{2}

Only a small number of Gerhardt’s 139 hymns were written before the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. Of these hymns, only two of them deal directly with the experience of war: “Dankgebet in Kriegeszeiten” (1653)\textsuperscript{3} and “Danklied für die Verkündigung des Friedens” (1653/56).

“Dankgebet in Kriegeszeiten” provides a lengthy thanksgiving to God who, in the midst of danger and burden, protects and provides for His own. Yet the hymn is much more than a simple song of thanks—it provides an account of Gerhardt’s own experience of the war, his interpretation of it as a burden placed on men by God himself for man’s sins, as well as his plaintive supplication for God to act with mercy and grace rather than judgment and callousness. The view of war as a heavy burden is established in the first two stanzas:

1. Wie ist so groß und schwer die Last
Die du uns aufgeleget hast...

2. Die Last, die ist die Kriegesflut
so jetzt die Welt mit rotem Blut
und heißen Tränen füllt.

The burden spoken of has a name, the \textit{Kriegesflut}, thereby associating the war with that other epic event in the history of mankind’s sins: the \textit{Sintflut}. Now, however, mankind is not drowning

\textsuperscript{2} Petrich, \textit{Paul Gerhardt: seine Lieder und seine Zeit}, 8
\textsuperscript{3} Though both hymns were first published in 1653, “Dankgebet in Kriegeszeiten” was presumably written in the years before the war’s end, while “Danklied” was written in the year 1648 shortly before the hymns were published (Cranach-Sichart 1957, 509).
in rains from heaven, but rather in its own blood and tears. Like the flood of Genesis, the war is a punishment by God against sins of man, i.e., “dem, der nicht fromm und heilig ist” (1.5).¹

Yet, even as God punishes, he offers consolation:

   Du strafst, und mitten in dem Leid
   Erzeigst du Lieb und Freundlichkeit (3.4, 5).

Before the hymn’s end, the speaker will again return to the topic of man’s sinfulness, describing mankind as being infested with “bösen Wunden”—the symptoms of which are: “Eiter, Striemen, Kot und Stank,” which only God, the doctor, can heal with His anointing grace (17.1-4).

   In the midst of his reprimand, however, God is said to comfort with love and friendship (3.5). He never completely withdraws His salvation (4.3) and, as a “treuer Hirt,” He protects His sheep both day and night from the wolves that surround them (V6).

   The speaker notes the mercy he and those surrounding him witness in comparison with others. He acknowledges that “Brüder” in other places are persecuted and hunted from “Haus und Hof,” whereas the speaker and his community still have their own “Sitz und Raum” (V7).²

Their surroundings still maintain “Polizei” or social order (9.1)³, whereas in the grand scheme of the war, chaos and disorder seem to reign:

   8. Sieh an, mein Herz, wie Stadt und Land
   An vielen Orten ist gewandt
   Zum tiefen Untergang;
   Der Menschen Hütten sind verstört

¹ All parenthetical citations of Gerhardt’s work will be alluded to by (Verse.Line) numbers. When just a verse is alluded to, the number will be preceded by “V.”

² On an interesting note, Ruth E. Mohrmann in her article “Everyday Life in War and Peace,” describes the quintessential notion of home for German civilians during the Thirty Years War as having one’s own space particularly around the fireplace: “To sit in one’s own smoke and fumes (“eigen Rauch und Schmauch”) was the very picture of home ownership; as the place where food was prepared, the fire tangibly assured survival and, in a broader sense, represented the actual center of domestic peace. It was right to the heart of this domestic peace that [the soldiers] penetrated again and again” (320).

³ “Polizei” is here synonymous with social and governmental order (Cranach-Sichart, Paul Gerhardt: Dichtungen und Schriften, 509).
The correct order of the realm of man (Stadt) and the realm of nature (Land) has been turned topsy-turvy, shifting towards a decline. Homes (the houses of men) and churches (the house of God) are turned around. The order of things being switched around in the disarray of war is a common theme among German writers at the time. In the most well known poetic account of the war, Gryphius’ “Thränen des Vaterlandes,” the church is also turned backwards: „Die Türme stehn in Glutt, die Kirch ist umgekehret.“¹ Several years later, in his 1638 *Trostgedichte in Widerwertigkeit des Krieges*, Martin Opitz references no less than four times the fact that the order of nature has become *verrirret*, confused, or *umbgekehret*, reversed.² Creation itself, through the immoral and destructive inclinations of humanity, had fallen into disarray. Greyerz writes that this pervasive conception of the ordered world being turned around ran parallel to the perceived subversion of morality:

One can read in such statements the great yearning for an ordered world and the reproach against the unpredictability of nature… Signs pointing to disorder in nature were also signs pointing to disorder in the moral conduct of humanity.³

Despite the reversal of social order, those in the speaker’s area are able to continue to serve God and they speak the Word “fort und fort/ alltäglich” (9.4, 5). This is the central reason for gratitude in the song. The conditions of war are evidently less severe in the place where the speaker is, yet he is still exposed enough to the outside world that he has seen or heard about the dire circumstances in other places. Perhaps, too, the speaker is trying to grapple with why he is not persecuted, but others are.

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¹ Andreas Gryphius, „Thränen des Vaterlandes,” in *Sonette: das erste Buch*, ed. Marian Syrocki, (Tübinen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1964), 48
He goes on to describe and ask for relief from the Last and Joch of war—if not for his sake then for the sake of children who must also bear such a yoke (15.5). This supplication takes an increasingly bold tone towards God:

Du bist ja Gott und nicht ein Stein

Wie kannst du denn so harte sein? (16.4,5)

Yet despite God’s apparent callousness, the speaker persists in a transcendent hope. This hope is expressed most ardently in strophe 14, when he asks for peace, which many people had never experienced because the war had been going on for so long. He hopes for joy in view of a peace that, “mancher Mensch noch nie einmal/ Geschauet in diesem Jammertal” (14.4,5).

This brings us to the question of defining what the Jammertal means for Gerhardt. This Jammertal, this valley of sorrows, stands for not necessarily for a definition of all human life since the fall of man, but rather the sort of existence that has been created by war and suffering. It is a description of a current, here-and-now problem. And in this problem, Gerhardt pleads that God enact an actual, tangible peace, though in this world, the “Mittel” for peace cannot be found (18.3-4). This is an acknowledgment that a peace for this war on earth is needed, but that without God there is no means on earth to enact such a peace. Whereas the terrors of war are brought about by the sins of man, the seeds of peace on earth are sown by God. This conception of the Jammertal bears strongly on two facets of Lutheranism. The first is the belief that earthly conditions can be improved. More will be said on this later, but suffice it to say at this point that this notion of improvement hinges on the conviction that God intervenes in time and space.

This second facet of Lutheranism—the intervention of God for man—is illustrated particularly well in the last lines and stanzas. Similar to Judaism, Lutheranism rests on a view of history in which God is present and actively intervening in history, and in which events in time
occur for intended purposes. Like the story surrounding the *Sintflut* mentioned earlier, there are simply times in the grand scheme of history when human sin reaches a point of overflow and God must intervene. This point is illustrated by Gerhardt’s portrayal of the *Jammertal*. 

Humanity drowning in its own sin, not just as in a flood but as in a cesspool of “Eiter, Striemen, Kot und Stank.” The only way for mankind to be set free from this intense suffering is by the intervention of God, who alone can enact a peace that occurs in time and space and is a tangible resolution to the agony of war. Yet the anguish and perhaps even pessimism evident in the poem carries with it a sense of hope and optimism. Germany may find itself at a moment of sinfulness and distress, but one can pray and expect intervention—not only for the Hereafter, but for this life—and, just like Gerhardt thanks God for the qualitative difference between his situation and the situation of brothers in more oppressed regions, human existence can actually be improved (though not perfected), suffering can be ameliorated, by bringing about peace.

The subtle optimism of the “Dankgebet” finds a momentary culmination in a second hymn, “Danklied für die Verkündigung des Friedens,” written in 1648 and published in 1653. This time Gerhardt portrays an ecstatic response to the Peace of Westphalia and its quelling of the awful war. The peace is a promise that “nunmehr ruhen sollen/ die Spieß und Schwerter und ihr Mord” (1.4). Germany should respond with joy, namely, with singing as a full choir thanks to God, that his “Gnad und Güte” are eternal (1.11, 12).

Yet celebration of the peace is not the poem’s only motivation. Throughout the song are acknowledgements of the sins of man committed during the war. “Der freche schnöde Sündendorn” is yet green and ripe (2.3), whereas the moorlands are barren and dry (4.8) from the rampages of war. Although a poem about thanksgiving and the peace, nonetheless exhortation and reproof play at least an equal role as consolation. The sins of man are used to contrast the faithfulness and holiness of God. At various points, the two elements, exhortation and consolation, are closely juxtaposed side-by-side or line-by-line:
Wir sind und bleiben böse
Gott ist und bleibet treu (2.9,10).

Man’s sin is not just constituted by individual war crimes, but is rather a stain on the core of his very nature. The song goes to great lengths to recall the condemnation due man as a result of iniquity:

Wir haben nichts verdient
Als schwere Straf und großen Zorn (2.1,2).

The discipline God unleashed through war has been equally matched by the comfort He has poured out in the subsequent peace and is something that should give each human occasion to grieve and reflect on his sins and God’s love:

5. Hier trübe deine Sinnen,
O Mensch, und laß die Tränenbach
Aus beiden Augen rinnen,
Geh in dein Herz und denke nach
Was Gott bisher gesendet.

When God’s punishment is not efficacious in causing man to repent, he deals in love and fatherliness:

Das hast du ausgelacht,
Nun hat er sich gewendet
Und väterlich bedacht (5.5-8).

In one sense, then, the new peace is just as much a test as the war was an imperative to wake up. The final strophe concludes with a swift imperative to the „harte Welt“ to „wach auf, wach
auf/ Eh als das harte Schrecken/ [sie] schnell und plötzlich überfällt!“ (6.3-5). He who lives unto Christ has nothing to fear.

The closing lines concludes the song with a sense of urgency: “[Gott] will die Lehre geben:/ das Ende naht herzu” (6.10) when the world shall live with God in eternal peace. In the “Ende” that is nearing, several ends are implied. It seems by bringing an “Ende” to the war, God wants to remind the faithful that an end, too, shall arrive for all things. Worldly peace after the war is foreshadowed here, in a sense, by eternal peace granted at the end. In addressing his audience with the plural “ihr,” there is a sense that they will experience this end, and the resulting peace, together, just as they are experiencing the bounties of the current peace. The fascinating twist here is that Gerhardt’s notions of eternal peace are not informed by the this-worldly peace of Westphalia, but rather the other way around. Instead of seeing the peace of Heaven in Westphalia, Gerhardt sees the peace of Westphalia present in the peace that shall be afforded at the Last. And all of these various Ends—the current end of war, the coming end of life, the end of suffering—are driven home by the fact that this is the end of the song itself.

When viewed together, there are certain similarities between the poems, the assumptions they make about reality, and the sorts of instructions and consolations they give their readers. Implicit in them are very similar sets of problems with life on earth, consolations to be sought in this life to cope with those problems and, lastly, the resolution to the problem of life and existence, i.e., eternal consolation.

The main problem with life on earth is the conditions created and mired by man’s nature. The first hymn, “Dankgebet,” is slightly more explicit in describing the situation as a “Jammertal” and a world in “Untergang” (8.3). The poem bears the appearance and rough edges of a composition made in the heat of war or trauma; of all the six hymns, it bears the most irregular rhyme and meter scheme, and its strophe structure is by far the simplest. Whereas on the other hand, “Danklied” expresses its message with intricate regularity, not only with almost perfect
regularity but also multisyllabic rhymes, structural harmony, and a wide range of rhetorical motifs. This contrast further illustrates the reality that war may have had on Gerhardt; it was more important for him to express his thoughts and pleas during war than to produce a stunning work of literary excellence. Yet both poems—whether written in war- or peacetime—are agreed on the deficiency of life on earth due to man’s sin. Even in “Danklied,” the peace has not yet healed the wounds of the land caused by the war; destroyed countryside and buildings remain as mournful realities not only of the sinfulness of man but also the insufficiencies of peace to right all wrongs on this earth.

There is some consolation for these problems, which afford people with means of coping with life’s present circumstances. In “Dankgebet,” comfort comes by knowing the speaker’s surroundings are not as oppressed as other regions—there is still the freedom to have one’s own space and to daily preach and teach God’s word. In the midst of war and punishment, God provides protection and love for his own. Furthermore, God is also sovereign over nature and events: “Dein Hand, die Erd und Himmel trägt,/ Hat Sturm und Wetter beigelegt” (5.4,5).

Comfort comes from knowing that, while the war may seem gruesome and harrowing, it was given by a sovereign God who not only allows for wars, but in His time allows for the same wars to cease as “Danklied” implies. God has seen fit to forge peace despite man’s sins.

Such consolations do not resolve the problem of man’s sin and the deficiencies of life on earth. Both hymns, rather, point to a sort of peace that cannot be realized on the earth as it presently exists. This peace, given by God after the “Ende,” is something that people can trust in with “unerschrohen[em] Mut” (“Danklied” 6.6). It is a peace that will heal not only war, but will penetrate the very nature and fabric of man to revive “Leib und Seel” (“Dankgebet” 17.5). This

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1 E.g. “Was Gott bisher gesendet/ […] Nun hat er sich gewendet” (5.5, 7).
2 E.g. This is achieved through: alliterative harmony spanning across lines and verses (…Als ihr zerstörten Schlösser/ Und Städte voller Schutt und Stein; Ihr vormals schönen Felder… 4.3-6); internal rhymes („Mit harter, scharfer Rut“ 2.6); and series of interlocking, multisyllabic rhymes (6.5-11).
3 One particular technique used frequently by Gerhardt is the Zwillingformel comprised of two rhyming or alliterated words (usually nouns) separated by a conjunction (usually “and”).
peace may come about after death for each soul. However, both poems create a sense of communal experience—the speaker is not an “ich” but a “wir” and “uns.” The “wir” in this case is confessionally bound and refers to German Protestants who have suffered during the war. In doing so, the poems collectivize the experience of war and conveys much more than one soul’s individual journey through life into heaven—sin, war, the earthly peace, and the great Peace to come in the end are all part of an unfolding saga. The faith that Gerhardt places in this earthly peace in alleviating the suffering of war is quite surprising, and we will unfortunately see that the Peace of Westphalia for Gerhardt—and many others—unfortunately did not always end the tale of religious tension and suffering.

b. “Die Zeit ist nunmehr nah” (1653) & “Herr, was hast du im Sinn?” (1666)

Gerhardt moved in 1642 to Berlin into the family house of Andreas Berthold, a lawyer, where he would spend nine years. Although it remains unclear why Gerhardt would move to the electorate of Brandenburg with no pastoral position, these years are crucial in terms of his poetic development. In 1647, 18 of his hymns were published in a hymnal entitled Praxis Pietatis melica edited by Johann Crüger, canton of Nikolai Kirche in Berlin. In 1651, three years after the Peace of Westphalia was signed, Gerhardt was ordained in Mittenwalde, a small village south of Berlin, “an welchem die Wunden des Krieges langsam vernarbten.”¹ The village had lost 75% of its population during the war. Little is known of Gerhardt’s time in Mittenwalde, yet his pastorate was most certainly characterized by the trials of tending a flock steeped in both financial and spiritual poverty. The area had been so poor particularly during the latter half of the war—more specifically as a result of widespread theft, pillaging and failed crops—that it was

unable to keep a position for a village pastor.\textsuperscript{1} Thus the village had endured the most brutal part of the war with little material or spiritual sustenance. Four years after accepting his position, Gerhardt married Anna Maria Berthold, daughter of Andreas Berthold and in 1657 moved back to Berlin to be the third deacon of the Nikolaikirche.

Though reunited with a familiar locale as well as close friends and a church community in Berlin, Gerhardt’s life continued to be marked by trials. Only one of the five children born to Anna Maria and him would survive, baptized Paul Friedrich in 1662. Moreover, predominantly Lutheran Brandenburg—with its Calvinist elector Friedrich Wilhelm—was steeped in confessional tensions similar to those that had begun the Thirty Years’ War in the first place. For Gerhardt this meant enforced limitations on his duties and rights as a Lutheran minister as well as increased pressure from Calvinist officials to amend his theology. Finally, in 1666, Gerhardt’s position was taken away in the first of two Amtsenthebungen, despite the fact that Gerhardt was already a much-loved and well-known pastor and hymnist in the area.\textsuperscript{2} Although the war had long since ended, Gerhardt’s biography demonstrates the extent to which the aftershocks of war continued to sway the everyday life of Germany.

During this time of his life, Gerhardt wrote two Kometenlieder—hymns in response to various sightings of comets during and after the war. Interestingly, in summarizing the central themes of Gerhardt’s poetry, D. Wilhelm Nelle aptly states: “Christus ist der Kern und Stern aller Gerhardtsschen Poesie.”\textsuperscript{3} At least in reference to the following two poems, Nelle’s statement is more literal than he probably intended. The two hymns address the phenomenon of comets, and though they each possess a vastly different moral tone, they both serve as a revelation of Christ. Gerhardt’s use of the comet would not have been a rare subject to address in poetry. The social upheaval during the Thirty Years’ War (1618-48) was accompanied by a marked

\textsuperscript{1}Rödding, Warum sollt ich mich denn grämen, 156-57
\textsuperscript{2} Bruppacher, “Paul Gerhardt 1609-76”, 5
\textsuperscript{3} Nelle, Geschichte des deutschen evangelischen Kirchenliedes, 146 (emphasis mine)
increase in the number of imprints recounting such natural signs, for example the number of comet pamphlets rose from about 20 after the comet of 1572, to 120 after the comet of 1618 and approximately 140 after the comet of 1680.1 Such pamphlets were often printed into the millions, at times this translated to 20 copies of a given pamphlet circulating for every literate citizen in a locale.2 These publications sought to spread the word about comet sightings as well as interpret the meanings of these natural signs. The sheer magnitude and variety of signs reported in Early Modern pamphlets and broadsheets support Benigna von Krusenstjern’s claim that, in the chaotic and uncertain times of the Thirty Years’ War, anything and everything could communicate impending disaster.3 Despite the various nuances of comet-pamphlets and tracts, the content can often be summed up in just two words: repentance (Buße) and edification (Erbauung).4 This function of comets bears a connection to Barnes’ conception of the Prophecy element of Lutheran apocalypticism, and likewise comets were often interpreted as prophets portending the wrath of God or warning man to repent of his sins before it is too late.

Yet, particularly in his first Kometenlied, Gerhardt departs from this quintessentially Early Modern exhortation-and-consolation function of comets. In this poem, the comet(s), or Wunder, is a sign of Christ’s quickly approaching second return—an event anticipated with joy rather than dread. “Die Zeit ist Nunmehr nah,” published in 1653, was written shortly after Gerhardt’s first position in the Mittenwalde church, in response to the comet of 1652.5 This hymn bears a surprising proclivity towards optimism and hope in the nature of Christ, considering that comets were normally associated with the wrath and punishment of God. “Herr, was hast du im Sinn?”,

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1 Greyerz, Religion and Culture in Early Modern Europe 1500-1800, 126
3 Benigna von Krusenstjern, „Prodigienglaube und Dreißigjähriger Krieg,” In Im Zeichen der Krise, edited by Hartmut Lehmann and Anne Charlotte Trepp, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1999), 63
5 C.f. the inscription that follows the hymn’s title (Gerhardt, “Die Zeit ist nunmehr nah”, 352).
although written much later in response to the comet of 1664, ¹ actually bears more in common with the dread and anxiety prevalent in Kometenlieder and Kometenflugblätter of the first decades of the Thirty Years’ War.

“Die Zeit ist Nunmehr nah” (1653) begins with the ominous words “the time is near”: the wonders in the sky act as a proclamation of Christ’s second Ankunft, His final return to earth. The original title of the song, “Vom Jüngsten Tage,” would have removed any doubt in the congregant’s mind as to which advent of Christ was being referred to (see figure below).

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¹ Gerhardt, “Herr was hast du im Sinn?”, 271
Within the proclamation of the comet and Christ’s return, there is a subtle tension established. “Die Zeit ist nunmehr nah” (V 1.1) lends a sense of urgency or fleetingness to the present inasmuch as it proclaims the nearness of the Last Days. This tension is paralleled by several other aspects of the poem. First, verbal tenses persistently alternate between present (Vs. 3-7, 10, 15) and future (Vs. 1, 2, 8, 9, 11-14, 16-18), evoking a sense of expectation for the future as well as attaching significance and suspense to the present. There is a so to speak “now, almost and not yet” time-tension evident in the song and this tension seems to revolve centrally around conceptions of heaven: we are both living for heaven and in this world; even as one rests in that which God has set aside for him in heaven, one can—tangibly, in this present world—taste and see “was für Gaben” the Father has for us. These two modes of existence, while perhaps in a modern sense may appear contradictory to one another, run parallel to one another in Lutheran theology.
The portrayal of the comets, the *Wunder*, are also facilitators of a tension between present and future. Their appearance is used to confront humans not only with the imminence of Christ’s return but, essentially, with life’s transience. There is no time-frame attached to Christ’s return; the *Wunder* should (*sollen*) mean Christ’s return, but no specific pronouncement is given besides a sense that the time is near. In lieu of this, the hymn shifts to a question whose existential significance is universal: “Was soll ich denn nun tun?” (2. 1). How is one to live between the tensions of life and death, time and eternity, earth and heaven, i.e. the revealed Christ and the returning Christ? The aspects and problems of human existence were a pervasive topic in hymns particularly during the hardships of the 17th century. Gerhardt, too, grapples with this theme throughout his poems, expressing a contemplative proclivity borne from the hardships faced throughout his life: “Angst und Schwermut haben Gerhardt lebtags nicht losgelassen, und zwar nicht nur als Lebensangst, sondern auch als Gewissens- und Glaubensangst und als Erfahrung einer existentiellen Traurigkeit.”

In view of the trials that mark life, what is one to do? One ought to live in the present by relying on that which God has promised, namely deliverance from the grave and from all other misery:

2. Was soll ich nun den tun?

Ich soll auf dem beruhn,
Daß du mich wollest reißen
aus meines Grabes Kammer
Und allem andern Jammer.

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2 Killy, „Paul Gerhardt: Glaube, Schwermut, Dichtung”, 12
A concise answer to a vast question. What in modernity is termed an “existential anxiety” for Gerhardt is rather an “existential anticipation.” Here, hope for the eternal future provides solace in the present.

A buttress to this hope is found in the nature of Christ, who spans the present, future and the eternal. While the individual endures tension between the various realms of time, Christ does not. Representations of Christ in the hymn shift between his body—i.e. Christ bound by time and decay--on the one hand and on the other Christ’s spirit—i.e. Christ who dwells in eternity. While meditating on the physical, tangible bodily form of Christ (specifically His eyes, mouth, hands, and feet), the speaker notes that Christ is *verwundt* (V 7). Christ, still wounded, has experienced the decay of this world and continually bears its scars. In other places, however, the speaker emphasizes the eternality and imperishability of Christ and heaven (e. g. vv. 8, 9) as well as the ability of Christ’s gaze to *erquicken* (3.4) and *auf das Neu erneuen* (10.4). This two-fold representation of the time-bound and time-less Christ illustrate the nature of hope which is found in the temporal world by awaiting the eternal one.

At the very center of all the various responses offered lies an unmistakable sense of joy. Christ welcomes the speaker through heaven’s gates not just with a smile or benevolence, but with laughter (V. 10). Christ’s return is not portrayed as a time of judgment but rather of healing (“Du wirst mit tausend Blicken/ mich durch und durch erquicken” 3.3, 4); of joy and mercy (“Werd ich denn auch vor Freud/ In solcher Gnadezeit/ den Augen ihre Zähren […] auf meine Wangen laufen? 5.1-3, 6); of paradise (“In deinem Paradeise” 8.4); and of freedom from death and suffering (“Hie ist kein Kreuz, kein Leiden/ Kein Tod, kein bittres Scheiden” 13.5, 6).

As the hymn’s portrayal of heaven’s splendor escalates, the speaker suddenly interjects, reproving himself for conjuring up notions of heaven which cannot possibly be imagined by the human mind:

14. Halt ein, mein schwacher Sinn!

Halt ein! Wo denkst du hin?
Willst du, was grundlos, gründen?
Was unbegreiflich, finden?

God and His heavenly "Engel Land" are \textit{unbegreiflich}, incomprehensible. This is the \textit{deus absconditus}, the hidden part of God that is veiled in mystery which man cannot penetrate.

The final three stanzas of the song, then, seem to take in the totality of the faith life—the body and spirit of Christ, the providence for poor children of a world mired in spiritual poverty and awaiting its second coming and expresses finally a prayer for the Lord to come to the salvation of the humble very soon, in fact, \textit{heut} (16.6). Quickly, though, he backs off slightly, acknowledging that the Lord himself \textit{weiß [seine] Zeit} (17.1). The Lord knows the right time to punish and to embrace, as Gerhardt expresses in one of his funeral sermons:

\textit{Damit nun aber gleichwohl das arme, elende Volk in seinen Sünden nicht ganz und gar verzagen und an der Gnade seines Gottes verzweifeln möchte, siehe, so will es Gott der Herr bei [...] Zorn- und Strafpredigten nicht bleiben lassen, sondern er läßt auch eine Trostpredigt hinzutun und seinem Volke zu verstehen geben, wie er zwar über sie zürne, aber doch zur rechten Zeit sich über sie erbarmen wolle.}

Regardless of what the speaker desires, God alone knows His timing, and it is not a matter for man to predict.

This lends insight into Gerhardt’s lack of concrete prediction as to when Christ would return. During the early years of the Reformation and into the end of the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, Lutheran pastors and theologians speculated on the dates and conditions of Christ’s second coming with a definite liberality. After many failed doomsday predictions, a question grew as to what degree

\footnote{Gerhardt, "Leichsermon auf Nikolaus Wernicke", 417-18}
one could really penetrate sacred mystery. The scourges and chaos of the Thirty Years’ War dismantled the Lutheran conception of historical and apocalyptic certainty:

That holocaust would help bring about a quite sudden collapse of apocalyptic expectancy in Germany, a collapse that marked as well as any change can the end of an age.¹

The waning of calculated, Gnostic speculation was a consistent factor of apocalypticism after the first decades of the Thirty Years’ War. Yet apocalypticism of a different sort continued, albeit divorced from the tendency to make calculated promulgations regarding the date and time of the Second Coming. This sort of apocalypticism was no less convinced of the coming End, but instead of making predictions it focused more generally on the prophetic purpose of such an event: to edify and console Lutheran believers. In a sense, this sort of apocalypticism far more resembled Luther’s position, in that he “took a vigorous stand against all efforts to wrest from God His timetable.”²

The culmination of the hymn is a prayer that Christ’s arrival not be feared (18.4) and that the Schreck auf Erden be turned into Fried und Freude (18.5-6). One sees in this hymn, then, an inclination towards hopeful expectation rather than dread. The comet mentioned in the stanza plays a secondary role as opposed to the centrality of Christ and the renewal of all things after his coming. Moreover, it is referred to as die Wunder which are supposed to reveal the Lord’s coming to the people. Judging by the joyful anticipation throughout the hymn, one can interpret Wunder as miraculous signs rather than ominous portents. The return of Christ is not something to be feared.

¹ Barnes, Prophecy and Gnosis, 8-10
² Oberman, Luther: Man Between God and Devil, 64
Whereas the first *Kometenlied* portrays the comets as a means of evoking anticipation of Christ’s return, quite a different tone is adopted in “Herr, was hast du im Sinn?”, published in 1666 but written after the comet of 1664. Although eschatological prophecy had somewhat faded towards the end of the Thirty Years’ War, this year represented an upsurge in apocalyptic expectations, not only because the date included the “number of the beast,” but also because of the major comet that appeared in 1664-65. Once again, the printing of *Kometenflugblättern* escalated,¹ though preoccupation with the Last Things would never reach the same intensity as it had decades earlier. Gerhardt’s portrayal of the comet is evidence of this renewed interest in heavenly signs, and he revives the comet as a means of conveying a warning against punishment for man’s sinfulness.

The various words used to refer to the comet are much more ominous than the first hymn’s benign *Wunder*: e.g. *Zeichen* (2.1), *brennende Kometen* (2.5), and *traurige Propheten* (2.6). This portrayal of comets bears strong resemblance to the types of depictions seen in the ubiquitous *Kometenflugblätter* in the decades surrounding the Thirty Years’ War. Yet these broadsheets were not without their counterparts in so-called “high literature,” and Gerhardt’s depiction suggests reference to an earlier poem written by Opitz in his *Trostgetichte in Widerwertigkeit des Krieges*:

> Was suchen wir viel nach? Was darff man zweiffel tragen?  
> Wie lange sol [Gott] auch durch Wunderzeichen sagen  
> Diß komme nicht ohn ihn/ Hat nicht die hohe Lufft/  
> hat nicht der Himmel selbst uns deutlich zugerufft?  
> Hat der Comete nicht sich grausam außgestrecket?  
> Hat nicht der Fewerschwanz die Sterne selbst erschrecket?  
> [...]  
> Den Scharffen Prediger/ den schrecklichen Propheten/

¹ For an example of a *Kometenflugblatt* from around this time, see Appendix 2.
Not only does Opitz use similar metaphors for comets (“Wunderzeichen,” “Scharffen Prediger,” schrecklichen Propheten,” and “Botten”) but the poem also illustrates the perceived cause of comets to be divine rather than natural. Although the natural explanations for comets were recognized as early as Aristotle, the true, spiritual cause of comets was “unquestionably the most important. This was human sin, which grew worse from day to day. Comets were indicators of the fiery wrath of God, warnings to repentance.”

God sent them as bearers of meaning and punishment: comets are not trivial phenomena of nature but are in and of themselves messengers of the divine. Moreover, the signs never (“niemals”) portend anything less than blood, death, war, and fluctuation (“Enderung”).

Returning to Gerhardt’s poem, we see that—in contrast to his first Kometenlied—the comet(s) play a central role, with nearly every stanza in the song referencing the strange natural phenomenon either directly or metaphorically. And whereas “Die Zeit ist nunmehr nah” opens with a proclamation, “Herr, was hast du im Sinn?” opens instead with no less than four vexing questions pertaining to the foreboding comet:

Herr, was hast du im Sinn?
Wo denkt dein Eifer hin?
Von was für neuen Plagen
Soll uns der Himmel sagen?
Was soll uns armen Leuten
der neue Stern bedeuten?

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1 Martin Opitz, “Trostgetiche in Widerwertigkeit deß Kriegs: das erste Buch”, 343.  
2 Barnes, Prophecy and Gnosis, 173
The questions illuminate several key issues in Gerhardt’s thought. First, what do the comets mean, i.e. portend? And lastly, how should we “arme Leute” live our lives? Raised in rapid succession, the poem quickly establishes a sense of urgency and plaintiveness that indicates anxiety rather than hopeful expectation. Gone is the joyful expectation brought on by the comets in Gerhardt’s first poem; now, the comets are signaling not a peace-giving reunion with Christ but instead a judgment for man’s sins.

For what reason must there be such punishment? Stanza 3.3 laments that the heart is “blind und kalt zum Guten,” which parallels in strophe 4 the lack of receptiveness to God’s Word:

4. Kein Mensch hört heut’ fast mehr,
   Was Gottes Geist uns lehr’
   In seinen heil’gen Worten;
   Drum muß an so viel Orten
   Von großen Zorn und Dräuen
   Das Sternenland selbst schreien.

The coldness and lack of attention to God’s word is a sign of the End noted in the Gospels, “Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.” As will be illustrated in subsequent hymns, coldness was an indicator of decay and deadness during this time. So because no one listens to the teaching of God as revealed through His written Word, God is forced to resort to communicate with man in on the great canopy of the sky: the starry landscape itself must cry out against the more specific sins of man:

5. Die Welt hält keine Zucht,
   Der Glaub ist in der Flucht,
   Die Treu ist hart gebunden

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1 Matthew 24:12
Discipline, faith, devotion, truth, mercy, and love have fled, fallen away, or disappeared. It is for this reason the cometical prophets have come; they bear divine attributions for Gerhardt and his hymn rests on the conviction that the comets carry a message for mankind of utmost importance. It is not merely the presence of the comets that signals such a message, but the verbal and audible attributes of the comets are also alluded to:

Das Sternenland [muß] selbst schreien (4.6).

These comets are verbally reproving humanity. However, the text lacks any any sort of “translation” of these messages by Gerhardt for his audience, although early on in the Thirty Years' War some did attempt such translations by predicting or ascribing ominous events to come in the future. ¹ By the time Gerhardt’s songs were published, the age of making calculated guesses as to the messages of the heavens had begun to pass. The closest Gerhardt gets to such a translation is the vague sense of “Zorn,” wrath, and “Dräuen,” threat (V. 4).

Whereas the first hymn meditated on Christ’s body, the second Kometenlied offers a meditation of sorts on the body of the prophetic comet: e.g. “Sein Lauf” (8.1), “Sein Strahl” (9.1), “Sein Licht” (7.5). The light and burning of the comet is repeatedly referred to. The anxiety over the sign is bound up, too, with ghastly light as though it revealed too much reality, too many sins to the people. From the perspective of the heavens, all things on earth—even the minutest sins—are visible. In his Trichter, Georg Philipp Harsdörffer (1607-58) even goes so far as to

¹ C.f. for example Ratsherr Andreas Kothe, who ascribed the 30 years of the war to the 30 nights he says the comet of 1618 soared through the sky: „Anno 1618 hadt [Ein großer Kometern] ... sich 30 Abendt sehen lassen. So ist lichtlich darauf abzunehmen weiln der Deutsch Kreis im Römischen Reich 30 Jahr lanch gewehrt...“  (Qtd. in: Krusenstjern, „Prodigienglaube und Dreißigjähriger Krieg“, 75).
compare stars metaphorically to ever-watchful “eyes of heaven.” If the stars were in a position to be messengers to humans of God’s wrath, they could just as well deliver messages back to God of man’s ongoing sin. In this sense, the heavens represented a middle-ground between God and man.

The mediating function of the heavens illustrates an analogous relationship between man, nature and Christ. The meditation on the parts of the stars in the second Kometenlied parallels the meditation on Christ’s body in the first. Some theologians at the time considered nature to be an extension of Christ’s body:

Christ, the “heavenly phoenix” had three bodies. His personal body was the human nature that he took from Mary. His spiritual body was the Christian church, to which he was spiritually bound. His “world-body,” finally, was ‘the great edifice of the heavens and the earth, which he fills everywhere with his ruling presence.’

The “ruling presence” of Christ is felt in the gaze of the stars in Gerhardt’s song. Whereas the resurrection of the first body had occurred once in history and the resurrection of the second body occurred in the Church, the transformation of Christ’s third body, nature, would come only at the Last Day, when earth is burned through fire and born again.

Christ’s presence is evident in the stars and He is also the “light of the world” and the “Morning Star.” When God is appealed to for mercy in the concluding supplications of the poem, the desire is expressed for His Word to “beleuchten” (10.3) and “helle glänzen” (11.4). Unlike the prophets, the gaze of Christ is redemptive rather than condemning:

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1 Georg Philip Harsdörffer, *Poetischer Trichter*, 440: „die Augen des Himmels.“
2 Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 207
3 Ibid.
4 John 9:5; Revelation 22:16
Wenn dein Wort uns nur blicket
So sind wir gnug erquicket (11.5, 6).

Christ, who heals, is the true mediator and His promises can be trusted—unlike the dreadful light of the comets, He has made amends for the sins of man.

Finally, a last supplication is aimed towards the renewal of the Word “in unserm Land und Grenzen” (11.3). The “wir” and “uns” in this song seems to bear connotation wider than just Lutherans, and implied in such a plea is the fear of God’s Word having fallen away from Germany, and with the Word, God too had removed his Spirit from Germany. After all, two of the most historical events of that time period had originated in German territories: the Reformation and the Thirty Years’ War. In the Reformation, God had blessed Germany by letting His Word be freshly revealed. Now it seemed God was punishing Germany for its sins. The culture or folk-bound connotation in this line by Gerhardt suggests the fear of a divine reversal of God’s blessing—a withdrawal of his presence from a specific people. This fear was widespread in Germany particularly towards the end of the 16th century:

Each people had its time of special grace from God, but in the history of the world few had ever seized the chance and lived up to what was offered to them. It was now Germany’s hour. Rarely had the Gospel been so clearly preached; rarely had any nation enjoyed such opportunities for learning and wisdom. If the Germans missed this chance it was gone forever.¹

In relating these two poems to each other, one sees several points of comparison. The most obvious is their dealing with comets. Both greatly affirm a pedagogical view of nature—that signs in the natural world are present to teach and edify mankind:

Da Gott dem Menschen zwei Bücher gegeben hat, aus denen er sein Wissen über das Heil beziehen kann, wenn er diese Bücher richtig liest, das Buch der

¹ Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 48
Natur und das Buch der Bibel, ist es ganz selbstverständlich, dass man in der Natur die Zeichen zuerst beobachten muss, um sie lesen zu können.\(^1\)

A differentiation can be made between merely observing phenomena and “reading” or interpreting them. The second hymn actually goes much farther in observing, describing and reporting these natural phenomena—whereas the first hymn, with little description of the comet, offers a fairly clear prognosis of the event: the star is to signal Christ’s return.

Despite the differences in tones, Nelle’s statement rings true for both poems: Christ persists as the “Kern und Stern” of Gerhardt’s *Kometenliedern*. In both hymns, however, revelations of Christ contain different messages and evoke different emotions. In the first hymn, meditations on the body and spirit of Christ help contribute to the sense of expectation of the peace that will reign after the second coming of Christ. This meditation is, in one sense, replaced in the second hymn with an observation or meditation on the body of the comet. The comet and Christ bear similar attributes: both are light, both have a gaze that seems to penetrate, both are referred to as a star. Yet in this poem, unlike the first *Kometenlied*, the star of the comet rather than the star of Christ takes center stage. Attention is drawn to the star and, in a sense, away from Christ until the last stanzas. The meditation on the comet evokes neither joy nor peace but rather dread and a critical awareness of sin. The penetrating light of the comet illuminates the darkness of sin without offering the sacrificial body of Christ as hope for redemption.

Gerhardt’s second *Kometenlied* helps us build on or embellish the optimism established in the first two hymns by evaluating his perspective of human nature. For in this *Kometenlied*, his depiction of mankind bears strongly on Lutheran, morally-realist notions of human depravity: sin is real, and humans are unfortunately inclined towards it.

A crucial point to remember is that the struggles Gerhardt faced during the war did not subside after the Peace of Westphalia but in many ways actually grew worse. The persecution

\(^{\text{1}}\) Stockinger, 2008, 96-7
faced by Gerhardt in Berlin, the deaths of most of his children and later his wife, his work in areas who only very slowly recovered from the wounds of war, and his *Treue* to his conscience and to God—these elements culminated most clearly in the decades *after* war. The sins expressed in the second *Kometenlied*, though, are not the unavoidable original sin, but rather are all the types of sins that humans have control over—humans can choose to be more loving and faithful through their actions.

For Gerhardt, sin remains real and inseparable facet of human nature. Thus, when he asked for earthly peace, it is not out of the belief that humankind can be perfected or strive towards some sort of utopia. The improvement of life in this *Jammertal* depends first on God who intervenes, but also on human hearts that are warm, not cold, and on people that that through their actions seek to remain true to the Word. This is a concept of improvement that must remain unique from modern notions of human progress and it also strongly echoes Luther, according to whom life on earth can be improved through the teaching of Holy Truth—even until (or perhaps especially during) the very end of the last Days:

Now that the last days have actually come, not only is steadfastness of faith called for, survival in the world is at stake also. It is of lasting significance that Luther’s rejection of all historical utopias did not entail abandoning the Church and the world to chaos: Christians are threatened but not helpless, under attack but not defenseless. Where the Gospel is preached, Satan’s destructive assaults can be survived. [...] For this dimension he used the sober, secular, practical, temporal and above all relative term *betterment* [sic].¹

Not even depravity or sin are excuses to exempt the Christian from working towards improved life and earthly surroundings. Rather, the Christian—with the assistance of his Creator—is to strive against sin from within, and chaos from outside, towards cultivation of order and improvement in the world.

¹ Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and Devil*, 74
c. “O Herrscher in dem Himmelszelt” (1666) & “Johannes sahe durch Gesicht ein edles Licht” (1666)

Although Gerhardt’s pastorate—rescinded in 1666—was offered back to him a year later, the pressure from the Calvinist elector only continued to grow more intense and bitter towards him. Reaccepting the position under the stipulations that were assigned to it, would have meant sacrificing theological and doctrinal integrity as well as certain freedoms to perform his pastoral duties, was something Gerhardt found himself unable to. From 1666-69, Gerhardt withstood extended tensions involving written exchanges with the elector himself as well as state officials. The only two letters that survive from Gerhardt were written during this time, one in which he wrote the elector of his need to remain faithful to his conscience in serving his flock:

Ich furchte mich vor Gott […] und ich kann nach dem, wie mein Gewissen von Jugend auf gestanden und noch jetzt stehet, nicht anders befinden, als daß ich, wo ich auf die vorher berührte Art und Weise wieder in mein Amt treten sollte, seinen Zorn und schwere Strafe auf mich laden werde.¹

This letter shows the strong moral uprightness towards which Gerhardt strove, reminiscent of Luther’s own adherence to God and conscience in his 1521 address at Worms:

„Unless I am convinced of error by the testimony of Scripture or […] by manifest reasoning I stand convicted by the Scriptures to which I have appealed, and my conscience is taken captive by God’s word, I cannot and will not recant anything,

¹ Qtld. in: Bruppacher, “Paul Gerhardt 1609-76”, 5
for to act against our conscience is neither safe for us, nor open to us. On this I take my stand." ¹

The conscience is one way that God informs man of right and wrong, and to act against it is to act against God.

“O Herrscher in dem Himmelszelt,” a hymn written on the occasion of unseasonably wet weather,² builds on Gerhardt’s second, more strident Kometenlied. It goes beyond merely the decay of morality to express the parallel decay in nature. It seems that the totality of earthly existence—the human as well as natural world—was quickly falling apart, rapidly approaching its total demise. The hymn opens with a question posed towards God: why is our field, and what it produces for us, so unshapely and sad? Implicit in the question is the main conflict in the poem: the unfruitfulness of the field and sadness of nature. As to the reason for such uncharacteristic wetness, the hymn soon turns to speak of mankind and its sins, noting the guilt of men which daily increases (2.4). Instead of praising God’s creation and loving the power of his word, man has turned into “blind[e] Heidenschaft” (3.4), and heaven has in turn become blind to man (4.1). One symptom of heavens’ blindness to man is that they wait for daylight but it never comes (4.3,4).

Thus, with the absence of light, man falls into discord:

5. Man zankt noch immer fort und fort
   Es bleibet Krieg an allem Ort,
   In allen Winkeln Haß und Neid
   In allen Ständen Streitigkeit.³

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² Gerhardt, “Buß- und Betgesang bei unzeitiger Nässe und betrübtem Gewitter”, 122
³ Karl Goedeke, a 19th century text compiler, notes that this verse may have been borrowed from pre-1648 poems by Gerhardt (Cranach-Sichart, Paul Gerhardt: Dichtungen und Schriften, 500).
In describing the depraved conditions of humanity, Gerhardt salvages language strongly reminiscent of Thirty Years’ War rhetoric, describing the ubiquity of Krieg, Haß, Neid and Streitigkeit. This is a time when the poor are especially targeted and are given no peace (7). With constant violence perpetrated by men, nature itself becomes something to be feared:

Angst kommt uns aus der Tief und See
Angst kommt uns aus der Luft und Höh (6.3,4).

In essence, man is increasingly afraid of the judgments God may unleash through these natural elements as a result of man’s behavior. Yet nature is not only vengeful, it stands in grief:

8. Drum trauert auch der Freudenquell
Die Sonn, und scheint uns nicht so hell;
Die Wolken gießen allzumal
Die Tränen ohne Maß und Zahl.

Since man does not grieve his sins (9.1), nature is left to do so—-the sins and guilt of man is reflected in the condition of nature. In this hymn, it is not just some far off phenomena like a comet that reflects this, but a field—something so close and near that, if it does not produce, will lead to starvation and death. Here, instead of a representation of the trinity, nature fulfills a function of symbiosis: nature begins to reflect the symptoms of the sins of man.

What results from this symbiotic relationship between man, God and nature is a reflection of moral degeneration seen in the decay in nature: the sun is dimming and the clouds, the rains are taking over, and the earth is growing colder. They grieve not only the sins of man, perhaps, but also the loss of the sun and the sense of order and light which it brings to the earth. Behind these few lines lay far more than an allegorical understanding of nature, but also a much more vast and elemental worldview shift that was taking place in various groups of
society at the time. Not only was there increased investigation of comets and other cosmic phenomena, but also of weather patterns and irregularities in other parts of the natural world. The Aristotelian notion of an immutable cosmos was breaking down. More recent weather study has suggested that throughout the 17th century, much of Europe experienced an “advent of cooler climactic conditions,” a *kleine Eiszeit*, shortening the growing season in many areas enough to affect food supply.¹ Nature was growing cold, feeble and dim, approaching senility, and, assumedly, death:

The sun was like a feeble old man, losing strength from day to day. […] One did not need to be an astronomer to know that nature was preparing for some enormous change. Simple country folk could testify that nature was going haywire. The old house was indeed cracking up.²

The world would eventually “whither, and die of old age.”³ The falling away of Aristotelian cosmic immutability as a collective worldview allowed even common people to freshly view the substantial changes and fluctuations on earth and in the heavens. These changes were most often interpreted within a context of “decay”—nature was suddenly fraught with symptoms of degeneration, implying that it was preparing to fall apart altogether.

Yet, in the apocalyptic worldview, decay was almost teleological. Nature, as Barnes states, was preparing for “an enormous change,” and for many of the period, that change was nothing short of the second coming of Christ and the end times. The sun was not only dimmer, it was seen to be hanging increasingly lower in the sky so as to make room for the “Son of Righteousness, as the whole edifice of nature collapsed.”⁴ Such sentiments were furthered primarily by German Lutherans, whose cosmic worldview—since the time of Melanchthon—had been shaped by viewing nature in a state of degeneration that would intensify in the Last Days.

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¹ Cunningham and Grell, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, 207-8
² Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 174
³ Cunningham and Grell, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, 27
⁴ Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 174
Even something as simple as prolonged rains or a “wet year” could act as evidence of this fomenting process.

Decay in nature was evidence of a much deeper decay in human morality and the history of civilization:

The world had witnessed a gradual decay since the time of the patriarchs; not only human civilization but nature, morality and faith showed signs of degeneration.¹

The correlation between decay in nature and decay in human morality better illustrates Gerhardt’s sudden shift later in the song into a more strident stance with liberal application of the imperative mood: he takes on the role of admonishing because humanity’s sins have made nature so distorted. On the one hand there are several commands issued towards humanity to grieve sins and beg God to be merciful and “Vatertreu” (11.4). Interestingly, the bulk of the imperatives are issued towards God himself, addressing him directly rather than indirectly: to free the world of its yoke of sin, to turn the evil men towards faithfulness (13.2), and to take in the earth’s “Angstgeschrei” with merciful ears (14.3).

Prevalent in this hymn as in others is the use of the imperative, both towards man and God. The commands aimed at man, “Menschenkind” (9.1), revolve around grieving sin and Buße. Through this grief and repentance, one makes himself “rein” so that one can trust in the Lord.

The imperatives towards God deal with alleviating the conditions of this present world, namely by alleviating the rain-soaked, fallow field. The Lord will make “In Gnaden bald ein Ende” (10.4). The speaker calls for an end—not of the temporal world but rather an end to the rage and punishment of God. The end is one that will be forged in grace rather than judgment. There are imperatives towards God that are aimed at eternity (“Und zeuch uns aus der Welt

¹ Cunningham and Grell, The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, 17
herfür/ Und kehr uns selbsten du zu dir!” [12.3,4]), the hymn is much more concerned with the conditions of this present world. The final two stanzas conclude with imperatives call for an amelioration of the problematic natural world, praying for healing of the land:

15. Reiß weg das schwarze Zorngewand
Erquicke uns und unser Land
Und der so schönen Fruchte Kranz
Mit süßem, warmem Sonnenglanz.

Significantly, the object sought by Gerhardt’s plea (the wreath) is composed of earthly elements, fruits warmed by the sun. It is like a rainbow--composed of water and air--and acts as a promise of God’s intervention and faithfulness. Gerhardt goes on to conclude the hymn by asking God to provide for the needs of the present as well as those of the eternal future:

16. Verleih uns bis in unsern Tod
Alltäglich unser liebes Brot
Und dermaleinst nach dieser Zeit
Das süße Brot der Ewigkeit!

Not only is this an echo of the Lord’s prayer, but also Gerhardt fully brings the hymn full circle: bread comes from wheat, which grows in the field with which the poem began. The rains have hindered the harvest of grain for bread, which was a very significant and symbolic part of the Early Modern diet:

Bread was, quite simply, the staple food, to an extent it no longer is anywhere in Western Europe today. […] As it provided the staple food, grain was crucial to everyone, in a way no other foodstuff was. It gave people the strength to work. So if there was a shortage of grain, for any reason, the effect on the diet of everyone was immediate and very noticeable, and it also directly affected everyone’s capacity to work. […] The unique position of grain in the diet of
everyone meant that it was the foodstuff whose absence could provoke riots and social instability.¹

Gerhardt connects the daily needs of the present—for bread and sustenance—with desire for eternity. Yet, this acknowledgement of the eternal is added almost haphazardly in the last line to a song whose majority focuses centrally on earthly conditions and sins. Eternity and the end of time is something that, for Gerhardt, will happen “dermaleinst,” but not now. The present conditions warrant not a great End, but rather a tangible resolution; they warrant a God who is active and merciful not only in eternity but also in the present.

The degree to which Gerhardt begs on behalf of this present world is surprising, since in the latter phase of his life, he increasingly viewed himself as an alien pilgrim on his earthly sojourn through the travails of a fleeting world towards the peace of heaven. To make matters worse, Gerhardt’s wife died in 1668 at 45 years of age. When his position in Berlin was definitively rescinded, he returned to Lutheran Saxony and took a final pastorate in the village of Spreewald. There, with his young son and his sister-in-law housekeeper, he lived out the rest of his “stillen, verborgenen Lebensabend,”² finding some degree of peace from the tensions and hostility that had governed much of his adult life. As the final sun set on his life, Gerhardt found foremost solace in the nearness of his quickly-approaching death and the fruition of the transcendent hopes he had sought after since a young child (expressed in his last will and Testament):

“[Ich habe] die fröhliche Hoffnung, daß mein lieber frommer Gott mich in kurzem aus dieser Welt erlösen und in ein besseres Leben führen werde, als ich bisher auf Erden gehabt habe: so danke ich ihm […] für alle seine Güte und Treue […]

¹ Cunningham and Grell, The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, 211
² Bruppacher, “Paul Gerhardt 1609-76”, 6
Even in the few examples of Gerhardt’s poetry in this paper it is clear that eternity was a recurring theme in Gerhardt’s works, an eternity that was conceptualized within the time and space of earth. In the latter years of his life, however, Gerhardt’s longing for the hereafter reaches a point of maturity, becoming increasingly vivid and articulate. This final poem by Gerhardt, “Johannes sahe durch ein Gesicht ein edles Licht,” bears on the one hand the most explicit apocalyptic portrayal of all Gerhardt’s works, and on the other hand one of his most lucid and descriptive expressions of heaven. The hymn is written on an excerpt from the *Revelations* of St. John\(^2\) in which the people of Christ are gathered in heaven from all tribes and nations around the throne of the God. The peoples are wearing white and waving palm branches, reminiscent of Christ’s joyful entry into Jerusalem the week before he was crucified. In explaining who all the people are and how they got there, Christ explains to John that they had

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1 Gerhardt, „Das Testament Paul Gerhardts“, 493

2 Dannach sah ich, und siehe, eine große Schar, welche niemand zählen konnte, aus allen Heiden und Völkern und Sprachen, vor dem Stuhl stehend und vor dem Lamm, angetan mit weißen Kleidern und Palmen in ihren Händen, schrien mit großer Stimme und sprachen: Heil sei dem, der auf dem Stuhl sitzt, unserm Gott, und dem Lamm!

Und alle Engel standen um den Stuhl und um die Ältesten und um die vier Tiere und fielen vor dem Stuhl auf ihr Angesicht und beteten Gott an und sprachen: „Amen, Lob und Ehre und Weisheit und Dank und Preis und Kraft und Stärke sei unserm Gott von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit. Amen.“

Und es antwortete der Älteste einer und sprach zu mir: „wer sind diese, mit den weißen Kleidern angetan, und woher sind sie gekommen?“

experienced persecution and sorrow in life and whose sorrows and sins had been washed away:

Diese sind's, die gekommen sind aus großer Trübsal und haben ihre Kleider gewaschen und haben ihre Kleider hell gemacht im Blut des Lammes. [...] Sie wird nicht mehr hungern noch dürsten; es wird auch nicht auf sie fallen die Sonne oder irgend eine Hitze; denn das Lamm mitten im Stuhl wird sie weiden und leiten zu den lebendigen Wasserbrunnen, und Gott wird abwischen alle Tränen von ihren Augen.¹

To make the claim that this hymn is one of Gerhardt’s most articulate expressions of heaven may seem at first premature—after all, the poem is not an original topic but rather a retelling of the vision of St. John and borrows heavily from the language of Luther’s translation.

On the other hand, it is in other ways extremely original and creative. First, it is the only hymn Gerhardt writes on the Revelation of St. John. Gerhardt confines himself to the scene of redemption and reunion with Christ and his people, who were scattered throughout the world—for example never venturing a hymn on the Final Judgment of Christ. Second, whereas the first Dankgebet written by Gerhardt during the scourges of war is the most irregular in terms of form, even upon first-glance this hymn has one of the most complex stanza structures and rhyme schemes not only of the six hymns explored in this paper, but of all Gerhardt’s works. Instead of a simple and traditional 4- or 8-line Strophes reminiscent of the Volkslied, here one sees a more intricate 11-line stanza. These strophes have a complex meter and rhyme scheme all their own, but one that stays regular and measured throughout the duration of the hymn. One example of this is the stanza that closely correlates to the above excerpt from Revelations, with notated rhyme scheme and meter to the left of the text:

4.

¹ ibid. 7:14, 16, 17
Much could be said about the effect that such a meter and rhyme scheme has on the content of the poem: the cohesion that the rhymed 7-syllable lines create through each stanza, or the concise brevity of the four-syllable lines, for example. Suffice it to say, however, that Gerhardt went much farther beyond a mere recapitulation of St. John’s vision; he crafted it not simply into a simple folk hymn to be sung by the masses (although that too), but further he crafted it into high poetry.

And in this poetry, he did not merely recycle the language of Luther’s Bible; many of the richest and most imaginative words in the hymn are not found in Luther’s translation, but rather illuminate the vocabulary of Gerhardt developed throughout the repertoire of his hymns. In this respect, the hymn can be viewed to a certain degree as a synthesis of Gerhardt’s oeuvre—the reiteration and tying together of loose ends of his myriad expressions of human experience, the deficiencies of life on earth, the struggles of a life devoted to God—and bringing them to culmination, to voller Blüte (7.11), in the expression of a heavenly realm in which all tears will be wiped away.
Many of the word and terms Gerhardt inserts in his hymn are landmarks that help orientate oneself in heaven, and these landmarks are surprisingly quite earthly. In Gerhardt’s hymn, the peoples are standing “im güldnen Himmelsfelde” (1.6). “Feld” in this sense can be an abstract space lit by “ein[em] edl[en] Licht” (1.2), but it could easily be seen as a natural field, as “Auen, die schön prangen” (9.3). The fields that once were overrun by wild forests as in the “Dankgebet,”¹ and that lay “ungestalt und traurig”² when the clouds grieved the sins of man, are renewed into a heavenly pasture golden with ripe crop. The field in this sense stands for nourishment and sustenance, and in heaven there is no thirst or hunger but rather Himmelsbrot that never spoils. Instead of incessant rainfall, here the sun shines just right—neither too brightly nor dimly. God will lead his sheep over Weiden and Auen (8.11, 9.3).

In this field of heaven, the people have their “Ort und Stand” before the lamb’s throne (2.2) where they live “Ohn alle Müh/Ohn alle Qual” (6.8, 9). This place they can call their own is without danger, unlike the “Haus und Hof” mentioned in the “Dankgebet” from which many were hunted during the war.³ In heaven, the people experience a Sitz im Himmel so to speak, a “Freudensaal der nimmermehr vergehet” (6.11). In this Saal, God himself lives in a Haus and prepares for his people Hütte (7.1, 2). Heaven, for Gerhardt, is a place of home that is grounded and imperishable.

These homes are protected in stiller Ruh (7.4). There is a peace, a tranquility, in heaven that enables people to have joy, to sing, to enjoy heaven itself. This Ruh is contrasted by the Angst und Trübsalswunden (4.6) in which people found themselves in on earth. Peace and stillness is kept and governed by God who sits in heaven in the highest. It is the sort of peace whose full culmination was never realized on earth, although it was worked for. And who are the people who will experience such a place? The “treue Leut” (5.2), those for whom “Treu” was

¹ “Danklied” (4.7)
² “O Herrscher in dem Himmelszelt” (1.4)
³ “Dankgebet” (7.2; 8.1-3)
not “hart gebunden,”¹ who did not give heed to “der Erde Pracht” (5.8). The peoples felt “recht wohl” by the “Lehr” of the Lord (V4). Those who once took God’s teaching to heart now experience the fruition of it: “[Gott] will die Lehre geben:/ das Ende naht herzu/ Da sollt ihr bei Gott leben/ In ewgen Fried und Ruh.”² They will find themselves delivered from this “Jammertal”³ and lifted into the eternal “Freudensaal” (6.10).

What can we make of these earthly landmarks? On the one hand, we seen in them an attempt to describe the indescribable through the only means humanly possible, namely by incorporating words and pictures from earthly experience. On the other hand, though, this truly is how Gerhardt sees heaven—and earth. The world is for him a “Gotteswelt,” and Gerhardt has an uncanny ability to conjure up images of the eternal “aus den Zügen des natürlichen und alltäglichen.”⁴ Heaven, for Gerhardt, a place that is not divorced from earthly conceptions but rather represents the epitome of home, sustenance and peace un-mired by willful sin and destruction. That a person can describe heaven from earthly elements is only somewhat surprising; that a person such as Gerhardt could do so, however, knowing the suffering he experienced directly and indirectly, is truly remarkable.

This poem imaginatively expresses the epitome of Gerhardt’s apocalypticism and conception of heavenly peace. For those who had remained treu to the teachings of Christ, the end of the world was something to long for, to await; it was the single event that would once and for all deliver the faithful from the bonds and deficiencies of life on earth. It was an event towards which even Gerhardt’s earlier hymns actively strive, yet reach fullest expression not only in his later poems but, most succinctly, in his last written statement before death, his last will and testament, which continues from the quote shared earlier:

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¹ “Herr, was hast du im Sinn?” (5.3)
² „Danklied“ (6.9-12)
³ “Dankgebet” (14.5)
⁴ Nelle, Geschichte des deutschen evangelischen Kirchenliedes, 153
V. Final Analysis and Conclusion

In order to offer a final analysis of the poems, I would like to readdress the three questions that were posed in the introduction of the paper concerning Gerhardt and apocalypticism:

a. What did Gerhardt say about the apocalypse?

b. How or to what ends did he engage the topic?

c. Why did he portray apocalypticism the way he did?

a. What did Gerhardt have to say about the apocalypse?

The hymns that were selected for this project all spoke to the topic of apocalypticism but in different ways. The rubric that was initially used illustrates several things about Gerhardt’s apocalypticism in the six hymns explored. First, it shows regularities and recurring trends or motifs in Gerhardt’s works. For example, the frequency with which he adopts a pragmatic, action-guiding tone, most often by using imperatives. In every song except for “Johannes sahe,” Gerhardt adopts such a tone. Another recurrent depiction in his works is resurrection, either of Christ or of the saints. Of course such references also bear nuances as they occur in each work, and may also have been used to say different things at different times, however their commonalities across Gerhardt’s work help us establish a more general context for his

1 Paul Gerhardt, „Das Testament Paul Gerhardts“, 493
apocalypticism, it helps us determine his reference points and emphases across the duration of Gerhardt's oeuvre.

In determining and elaborating on these reference points, the rubric establishes two foundational trends in Gerhardt's works: what apocalyptic themes did he engage, and what themes did he not engage?

First, he several times specifically mentions an “Ende.”¹ This End seems to imply more than departure from the earth through individual death. The End is always associated with the collective “wir” or else aimed at the entire “arm[e] Welt”—suggesting an End of all things earthly. Moreover, the End is also always associated with goodness and eternal peace. God is Lord of all ends: “Der Herr, der aller Enden/ Regiert mit seinen Händen… Der ist mein Hirt und Hüter.”²

Second, Gerhardt talks about the second advent of Christ. The most explicit mention of this is in his “Dankgebet” in which the heavenly Wunder supposedly signal Christ's Ankunft. In additional hymns, though, Gerhardt beseeches Christ, the “schön[en] edl[en] Stern”³ to return to earth. Again, this event is associated as one to be anticipated and hoped for rather than dreaded.

But what did Gerhardt not address? First, he barely touches the topic of social or religious persecution, which has been noted by one scholar to be one of the foundational elements in this tradition since the time of Jewish Apocalypticism and was especially prominent in Christian apocalypticism, which found its roots in the early persecution of the Church.⁴ This would not be so surprising except that Gerhardt indeed experienced religious persecution and pressure during his time as deacon in Berlin. Yet he never incorporated this particular theme into his hymns or into his view of the End. The only time he explicitly mentions persecution is in his “Dankgebet,” written of course before he went to Berlin, and it is not him but others who are

¹ “In Gnaden bald ein Ende mach!” („O Herrscher“ 10.4); „Ein gutes End erreichen!” („Herr, was hast du im Sinn?” 12.4); „Das Ende naht herzu/ Da sollt ihr bei Gott leben/ in ewgem Fried und Ruh“ („Danklied“ 12.10-12).
² Gerhardt, „Der 23. Psalm“, 301
³ “Herr, was hast du im Sinn?” (10.3)
⁴ Collins, Apocalyptic Imagination, 6-8
hunted from “Haus und Hof”—he and those around him are fortunate to have their own “Sitz und Raum” (V7).

Finally, a most surprising trend in Gerhardt’s apocalypticism is that he never once engages in any of his works: the Final Judgment. This event is one of the most integral of the Christian Apocalyptic schema and Lutheran conceptions of history, and Gerhardt remains mute on the topic.

To be sure, Gerhardt does speak of judgment—on earth; the war, the comets, the fallow field and in many ways, the absence of Final Judgment in Gerhardt’s work seems to have been replaced by a sort of strident, earthly judgment that is somewhat anachronistic in the waning apocalypticism after the 1630s. For Gerhardt, loyal to the Lutheran spirit, sin is an inborn trait of man, it is very real and it is a destructive force that deserves nothing short of the wrath of God. Sin is ugly, comparable to a cesspool of “Kot und Stank.”¹ One reads in Gerhardt’s works that, for the faithful, God’s judgment happens now, on earth, while they can still repent. This is an aspect of Treue that is not only mentioned occasionally in these 6 hymns but was also prominent notion in Lutheranism. God promised He would punish and judge the sinful, and all of the elements of suffering and effects of sin experienced in our earthly Jammertäler are evidence of Him remaining treu to that promise. And since He remains true to his promise of punishing and judging, people can trust that He will be true to His promise to save His children in the End. It is only through understanding God’s Treue that man can learn to be faithful, though he will continually fall short. In any case, for Gerhardt, divine judgment and retribution is happening now, all of nature is participating in it and reflecting it—and he has striven to pass the test of his conscience throughout, paving the way for a confident, unabashed longing and certainty of heaven and eternal peace. Heaven as a thematic constant sheds more light on how exactly Gerhardt went about expressing his conception of the Apocalypse.

¹ “Dankgebet” (17.2)
Yet while Gerhardt describes the various judgments of God on earth, he never once addresses any sense of culminating Judgment in the hereafter—he speaks of the *Jüngsten Tag* but never of the *Jüngsten Gericht*. What are we to make of this unique facet of Gerhardt’s apocalypticism? Expanding on the social context in which Gerhardt wrote his hymns provides some insight into this question, but does not yet fully answer it.

*b. How or to what ends did he engage the topic?*

To a certain extent, the absence of the Final Judgment can be understood by remembering who Gerhardt’s audience was: Gerhardt is almost always fellow Lutherans, although there are several times he makes his appeal to Germany as a whole. While a considerable amount of Gerhardt’s hymns do focus on the “ich,” the hymns explored here demonstrate that—especially in matters of moral exhortation—Gerhardt still uses the collective “wir,” strongly reminiscent of hymns closer to the time of the Reformation. Morality and contriteness before God, though of course a choice of the individual soul, is still a very collective issue for Gerhardt, often tied to the confessional group, the Lutherans. Gerhardt is most concerned for the spiritual formation and salvation of Lutherans, and those who are faithful to the cause of *Sola Gratia* do not need to fear final Judgment.

It must be noted, however, that several times we have seen that the “wir” seems to be bound more to a national group of Germany and at times Gerhardt also seems to be concerned with the fear that Germany will fall away from the preaching of the pure Word which God has revealed to it. Those who have fallen away from this preaching will need to fear Judgment but, being outside the fold of Lutheranism, all of Germany may not have been viewed by Gerhardt as his moral charge.

A final aspect regarding the absence of Final Judgment in Gerhardt’s work pertains to Gerhardt’s life circumstances. The struggles of the Thirty Years’ War were really just the beginning of religious confrontation and earthly poverty for Gerhardt. Many have written on the
disillusioning affect of the war towards the 1630s. The sheer number of wartime developments and the burden of poverty and violence made the comprehension of reality daunting. \(^1\) Gerhardt, who was no stranger to the catastrophic effects of the war, never quite escaped this atmosphere until the very end of his life in Spreewald. Thus, for Gerhardt, earth was the place of judgment and the constant need to remain true.

Some final issues that must be discussed in contextualizing Gerhardt have to do with the degree of power and influence apocalypticism still possessed as a social unifier. Gerhardt wrote all of his hymns at a time when apocalyptic sentiment, or at least apocalyptic predictions, in Germany was waning. Having reached a climax in the early 17\(^{th}\) century, eschatological expectation enjoyed something of a revival during the early years of the Thirty Years’ War, but by the 1630s “the old prophetic excitement had begun to wane quickly among Germans influenced by the Lutheran tradition.”\(^2\) The gradual dissipation of apocalyptic fervor was not without several short-term rebounds, including the comets of 1664-65 and the year 1666. Apocalypticism’s retreat from the German Lutheran worldview was visible in popular literature such as the decrease in production and dissemination of things like wonder-books, Flugblätter and Kometenflugblätter. The trend was especially evident in high literature, in which the Last Day was already used as satire in dramas by mid-17\(^{th}\) century. And most hymn anthologies also demonstrate a gradual shift from eschatological topics towards personal pietism as time went on.\(^3\)

Certain aspects of Gerhardt’s work line up with these trends. Gerhardt never suggests in his hymns or other texts a specific time frame as to when the Lord will return. Prediction of future events is simply not his concern or intention. He is far more preoccupied with the moral condition of mankind, receptiveness to God’s Word, and how to live that receptiveness out while waiting for “das gute End.” To be sure, there is tension surrounding when the Lord will return

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\(^1\) Barnes, Prophecy and Gnosis, 256
\(^2\) Barnes, Prophecy and Gnosis, 257
\(^3\) Barnes, Prophecy and Gnosis, 259- 60
and enact the End, but the tension has much more to do with longing for heavenly peace rather than speculating as to when it will be.

c. Why did Gerhardt portray apocalypticism the way he did?

In answering this question I must expand upon several related points of inquiry I asked myself while completing this project. Returning to the secondary literature discussed in the introduction begs the question how Gerhardt’s apocalypticism fits into the two functions of eschatological expectation outlined by Cohn, Cunningham and Grell. Is his apocalypticism merely a tool to incite revolution and social change, as Cohn might suggest? Is it a form of escapism from the crises of the day, as Cunningham and Grell would argue?

Gerhardt’s hymns are concerned with social change, but not the sort of change that seeks fruition in the political arena, as discussed by Cohn. Rather, he is concerned for the sort of social change that takes place in people’s souls but that also brings results for the collective. If people would just repent, if they would just grieve or wake up, then God might see fit to stop punishing us. Likewise, his apocalypticism is not merely a form of escapism, since even in its thrust towards heaven still greatly concerns itself with the alleviation of suffering on earth.

Gerhardt threads his apocalypticism along with questions. These questions are of course phrased differently throughout the various hymns to address the topics at hand, but they all strike a similar chord in terms of their desperate concern with the nature of human reality:

Was soll ich denn nun tun?¹

Was soll uns armen Leuten/ der neue Stern bedeuten?²

Was ist es doch, das unser Feld/ [...] so ungestalt und traurig macht?³

Wer ist, der Buße tut?⁴

¹ “Die Zeit ist nunmehr nah” (2.1)  
² “Herr was hast du im Sinn? (1.4, 5)  
³ “O Herrscher” (1.2, 4)  
⁴ “Danklied” (2.8)
In these questions, sprinkled throughout the hymns, it is evident that Gerhardt is really seeking to understand life on earth on behalf of those faithful to Christ. He is continually pressing up against the big “why” questions of life, in order to wrap his mind around the human condition, the dynamics of suffering, the landscape surrounding him of those who sin and those who repent, and the complex interrelationships between sorrow, disobedience, repentance, peace and mercy.

The need to continuously understand these aspects of life is all the more necessary since Gerhardt’s world, and the world of his contemporaries, was less and less the static, predictable world of the Middle Ages. The heavens were no longer immutable, moreover neither was humanity--while sin has always been a defining characteristic of man, evil was actually in a crescendo. Germany, once the recipient of God’s favor and Word during the Reformation, now finds itself having failed to live up to His Word. The world is not stagnant but dynamic, in a state of moral and natural decay. It is a realm in which all the stops have been pulled and even the most trustworthy natural phenomena can not be relied upon to rise in the morning or set at night.

And so, how ought one to live? How ought one bide his time in a decaying world? Gerhardt himself, though living in a fading and decaying world, continued to go about his work without giving up, striving to remain faithful. According to him, this was one of the highest duties a man could fulfill:

Den allerklügsten Rat, den ein menschliches Herz hier auf Erden fassen und
ergreifen kann, der bestehet darin, daß er zur Zeit des Trübsals sich vor Gott
demütige und alles, was er ihm zuschicket, gehorsamlich auf- und annehme.¹

¹ „Leichseremon auf Nikolaus Wernicke”, 429
Loyal steadfastness is emphasized here, as it is in many of the hymns; Gerhardt was in this fight for the long haul, he strove even from a young age to remain true to his conscience and to God.

One remains faithful not only through spiritual devotion but also through Trauer and Freude. The sinner is to grieve not only his own sins but the sins of man instead of leaving the Trauerarbeit up to nature, as in the case of the fallow field in “O Herrscher in dem Himmelszelt.” If man does not grieve his sins, then nature will, and then that carries consequences that affect even the material needs of people. Lastly it is in grief that people find repentance and can have more confidence in the grace of God; grief is ultimately a means towards joy.

Too, though, throughout the hymns are depictions of an exuberant mirth, and in this life one should participate in this joy. Joy is a common element in Gerhardt’s writing, most often displayed with Lachen. Joy for Gerhardt is a quality of the divine: God opens heaven’s door in full joy, “mit Lachen.”¹ This is the ultimate twist on the mournful fate of death: “wo [Gott] selbst schließlich als der Lachende offenbart, ist der Tod letztlich nur ein ‘Scherz’.”² Unadulterated joy awaits the faithful in heaven. Also expressing joy, Gerhardt invites Germany to sing joyfully after the peace of Westphalia, not because of the peace treaty itself but rather because God’s grace “bleibt dennoch ewiglich.”³

To have joy is not simply a means to fill in the empty moments of this tedious existence, but it is an internalization and living out of divine qualities for Gerhardt, who attributes joyful singing with God. Singing for Gerhardt is associated with heaven and joy throughout Gerhardt’s poems:

Hie ist der Engel Land […]

Hie hör ich nichts als singen.⁴

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¹ “Die Zeit ist nunmehr nah” (10. 5, 6)
² Winfried Zeller, Theologie und Frömmigkeit, Bernd Jaspert, ed., (Marburg: N. G. Elwert Verlag, 1971), 159
³ “Danklied” (1.11, 12)
⁴ “Die Zeit ist nunmehr nah” (13.1, 3)
In his hymns, he regularly beseeches his Mitsinger to raise their voice in full choir. In doing so, he goes beyond depicting heaven or psychologically escaping into a construct—he actually enables his audience—while still on this earth—to participate in what he views as a divine activity. He creates a point of connection between heaven and earth in order to spur people on in their Treue.

In offering summation of Gerhardt’s apocalypticism, I find that the most suiting thing to end with—paradoxically—is the title of this thesis. The words Jammertal and Freudensaal were an obvious choice for the title not only for their rhyming qualities, but because they convey the prominence of both sorrow and joy at the heart of Gerhardt’s poetry—his works the rhyme “Leid-Freud” occurs no less than 40 times.¹

More difficult to determine however, was the relationship between the two. In working with texts so closely during the research process, particularly older texts that take longer to understand on their own terms without some sort of post-modern filter, it is almost inevitable that one goes through various phases of conceptions and re-conceptions while trying to wrap the mind around what the author was truly trying to say to his own, contemporary audience. In turn, my conceptions of this relationship have changed and developed throughout the months I spent reading his works. I had first considered the title “Experiencing the Freudensaal in the Jammertal,” with the implication that Gerhardt, in his apocalypticism, was simply attempting to cut a slice of the heavenly pie to eat on to earth. Earthly existence, spoiled through-and-through by the fall of sin, was nothing but a Jammertal, and Gerhardt found solace in focusing merely on heaven and eternal peace, and as a result experienced in his hymns a piece of heaven on earth.

Yet while the very visual longing for heaven cannot be understated in Gerhardt’s work, the relationship between heaven and earth, sorrow and joy, are not as simple as it once seemed. The more his hymns were viewed in their context it became clearer the extent to

¹ Zeller, Theologie und Frömmigkeit, 159
which earth and earthly landmarks played a role for Gerhardt in conceptualizing heaven. Even after spending his childhood in a society marked by war, violence and instability, it is remarkable that Gerhardt continues these sorts of prayers, that he still believes it is possible for conditions to improve.

The term *Jammertal* appears in the first of these six hymns, used to describe the suffering of war. One senses here just how much Gerhardt really pleads for alleviation of conditions in the time-and-space continuum—not simply an end to all things earthly. The term *Freudensaal*, on the other hand, occurs in the final hymn—one which, in comparison to the first hymn full of suffering and prayers, devotes itself to the portrayal of heaven using the earthly landmarks that were destroyed during the rampages of war and sin: home, fields and sustenance, and peace. Instead of a growing disillusionment experienced by many of his contemporaries, we find in Gerhardt a flowering of religious devotion, literary expression, and an increasingly fervent confidence in the grace of God despite man’s sins. Not only this, but more surprisingly we see a persistent portrayal of aspects of earthly life that are good—home, nourishment, peace—that will accompany the believer into heaven.

These three aspects of earth that are present in heaven are significant, and not only because it illustrates the extent to which Gerhardt continued to view aspects of life as good despite suffering. They are significant, too, because the illustrate points of earthly existence in which man and God must interact and work together towards improvement. God gives man the raw elements to make all three (home, peace and nourishment), and yet all three require a certain degree of work or cultivation on the part of man. In order to make a home—as opposed to just a house—one must also tame back both physical and spiritual wilderness to create space in which to build and take up roots. Likewise, in order to make peace, one must tame the elements of disorder and discord—whether physical, spiritual or interpersonal. Lastly, to get nourishment, one must take the seed God creates and plant it in the earth—making a field. In this sense, home, nourishment and peace represent not only earthly landmarks present in
heaven. They represent the points on earth in which God and man were both present and had to actively work with one another. And because of this mutual engagement, they represent the parts of earthly life that were “good.” They represent the space that exists between the sorrow of the Jammertal and the joy that will be fully experienced in the heavenly Freudensaal.

To illustrate how Gerhardt practically worked these concepts out in his life, too, we must look between references to the Jammertal in the first hymn and the Freudensaal in the final one wherein lay the remaining four hymns. And between the earthly sorrows and heavenly joy that Gerhardt awaited in his own life, though waiting for the “sanfte Ruhe,” he planted his own apple tree after the fashion of Luther, in the form of 134 hymns and 15 Latin poems. In this respect, one views in Gerhardt’s hymns the tension between on the one hand life on earth in which increasing sin obscures the way to heaven, and on the other hand life in eternity in which the markers of earth adorn the fields of heaven. Why write poetry when the world is seen to be ending? After all, writing poetry is similar to planting a seed—it takes time to grow, to seek an audience or a congregation, and—especially important for Gerhardt—it takes time for people to grow responsive to moral polemics and change their ways. And time is scarce in a world approaching its Untergang.

However, in accordance with the Lutheran worldview, planting seeds brought much more about than just earthly bounty--the seed itself was seen to be the kingdom of God, which must start out small, as small as a mustard seed, in order to eventually become the biggest plant in the entire garden, bearing fruit into eternity.1 The seed which must be planted is the point at which man and God must interact for improvement. Gerhardt’s various invocations of the apocalypse work within this landscape between the Jammertal and Freudensaal to heighten the interrelationship between earth and heaven. It is an “existential apocalypticism” that gives meaning to human existence and earthly joys while at the same time drawing people’s attention to what lies beyond.

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1 Matthew 13:31-32
d. Between the Freudensaal and the Jammertal: a Conclusion

Heretofore an analysis of the apocalypticism of Paul Gerhardt, one of the most significant hymn writers in Lutheran tradition, has not been undertaken. Apocalyptic sensibilities greatly shaped the mentality of generations immediately following the Reformation and throughout the 17th century. Throughout this thesis I have interpreted six hymns by Gerhardt in order to argue that Gerhardt does in fact engage the topic of the apocalypse in his work. On the one hand, the hymns demonstrate a morally realist perspective of man’s depravity, which causes a certain degree of existential anxiety: how is one to live in a Jammertal that is in a state of visible and moral decay? On the other hand, however, eternal peace and joy form the centerpiece of Gerhardt’s apocalypticism as opposed to Final Judgment. The reality and nearness of heaven—even in the midst of decay—enable one to engage existential tensions with meaning for both the present and the Future. Gerhardt’s apocalypticism is, in a sense, an existential quest—one that he took seriously not only in his hymns but also in the turmoil of his life. To live rightly in the world essentially means to remain steadfast amidst the Ach und Weh of the world, while also working with the hope of a better future. That the future for Gerhardt culminates in “das gute End” implies that people, too, are to work towards such an end.

One wonders if the degree of hope implicit in the Lutheran apocalyptic tradition was, along with Kometenflugblättern and the printing press, simply a characteristic phenomenon confined to the unique turmoil and mentality of Early Modern Europe. Yet, this optimistic view of living in the face of cataclysmic crisis finds many voices in the German Protestant tradition, even into Modernity. During the harrows of World War II, Nazi resistor Dietrich Bonhöffer wrote, in an essay entitled „Optimismus“: “Mag sein, daß der Jüngste Tag morgen anbricht, dann wollen wir gern die Arbeit für eine bessere Zukunft aus der Hand legen, vorher aber nicht.”1 Writing poetry

1 Dietrich Bonhöffer, „Optimismus.“ In Widerstand und Ergebung: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen aus der Haft, edited by Eberhard Bethge. (Gütersloh: Gütersloh Verlagshaus Mohn, 1980), 24
in a world reaching its ends was Gerhardt’s fulfillment of the mandate to go about one’s worldly work—not escaping from the demands of this earth, but at the same time entrusting hope and the most beautiful things of this earth to heaven. In whatever Jammertal singers of his hymns would find themselves in, Gerhardt seemed to write in order to provoke his readers and listeners to grieve their sins in a world swiftly degenerating. And if they should one day find themselves in the Freudensaal of eternity, hymns and singing one be one of the many earthly markers adorning realm of heaven. In a world approaching its end, Gerhardt portrays the apocalypse as a means to navigate himself and his fellow man on the journey between the Jammertal and the Freudensaal. ■
### Elements of apocalyptic tradition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Factors</th>
<th>Dankgebet in Kriegeszeiten (1648)</th>
<th>Danklied für die Verkündigung des Friedens (1648)</th>
<th>Die Zeit ist nunmehr nah (1656)</th>
<th>Herr, was hast du im Sinn? (1666)</th>
<th>Herrscher in dem Himmelszelt (1666)</th>
<th>Johannes sahe durch Gesicht (1666)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General shortcoming of life on earth</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persecution*</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social powerlessness†</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical trauma#</td>
<td></td>
<td>X V 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War*</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inevitability of death†</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famine†</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sickness, Disease†</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decay in nature, degeneration §</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X V4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portents</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decay in morality</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Literary Features

| Divine Revelation* | | X | | | X | |
| Divine Reversal* | | | X V 11 | | | |
| Morally action-guiding tone* | X | X | X | X | | |
| Imperatives | X | X | X | X | | |
| Exhortation | | | | | | |
| Consolation | X | X | | | | |

### Themes

| Messiah figure | | | | | | |
| Second coming of Christ | | | | | | |
| Final Judgment | | | | | | |
| Resurrection | x vv. 11, 17 | x | x | | | |
| Rebirth of paradise, revival of nature | x 14.5, 6 | | x | | x | |
| Good vs. Evil | | | | | | |
| Sense of urgency | x V 6 | | | | | |

* Collins 1984, 6-8  † Cunningham and Grell 2000

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A Kometenflugblatt printed in 1665 on the appearance of the 1664 comet. This broadsheet illustrates the prophetic function of comets in exhorting man for his sins. It is printed with a lamentation song about the comet, the first stanza of which reads: “Ach market auff und höret an/ Ihr frommen christen Frau und Mann/ was ich euch wil verkünden/ Wie uns Gott zu end dies Jahrs/ Ein Comet-Stern sehen laß/ Zu Wahrnung unser Sünden” (Johann Schultes [Zürich 1665]). In: Dorothy Alexander and Walter L. Strauss, *The German Single-Leaf Woodcut: 1600-1700*, (New York: Abaris Books, 1977), 566.
Appendix 3

(All poems extracted from Cranach-Sichart’s 1957 critical edition.)

1. Wie ist so groß und schwer die Last,
   Die du uns aufgelegt hast,
   O aller Götter Gott!
   Gott, der du stärk und eifrig bist
   Dem, der nicht frohm und heilig ist.

2. Die Last, die ist die Kriegesflut,
   So jetzt die Welt mit rotem Blut
   Und heßen Tränen füllt;
   Es ist das Feur, das hirzt und brannt,
   So weit fast Sonn und Mond sich wendet.

3. Groß ist die Last, doch ist dabei
   Dein starker Schutz und Vatertrau
   Uns gar nicht unbekannt;
   Du strafst, und mitten in dem Leid
   Erzeigt du Lieb und Freundenlichkeit.

4. Wir unseren Teils sind dir verpflichtet
   Dafür, daß du dein Heil und Licht
   Uns niemals ganz versagt;
   Viel andre hast du abgelohst,
   Uns hast du ja noch oft versolt.

5. Wie manchmal hat sich hier und der
   Ein großes Wetter der Gefahr
   Um uns gezogen auf;
   Dein Hand, die Erd und Himmel trägt,
   Hat Sturm und Wetter beigegleitet.

6. Wie oftmals hat bei Tag und Nacht
   Der Feinde List und große Macht
   Uns, deine Herd, umringt;
   Du aber, o du treuer Hirt
   Hast unsern Wolf zurückgeführt.

7. Viel unserer Brüder sind geplagt,
   Von Haup und Hof dazu verjagt;
   Wir aber haben noch
   Beim Weinstock und beim Feigenbaum
   Ein jeder seinen Sitz und Raum.

8. Sieh an, mein Herz, wie Stadt und Land
   An vielen Orten ist gewandt
   Zum tiefen Untergang;
   Der Menschen Häfen sind versöhnt,
   Die Gotteshäuser umgekehrt.

9. Bei uns ist ja noch Polizei,
   Auch leisest wir noch ohne Schwei
   Dem Herrn seinen Dienst;
   Man lehrt und hört ja fort und fort
   Alltäglich bei uns Gottes Wort.

10. Wer dieses nun will nicht verstehn,
   Läfts in die Luft und Winde gehn
   Und bei so hellem Licht
   Nicht Gottes Gnade und Güet erkennen,
   Der ist fürwahr durchaus verblendet.

11. O frommer Gott, nimm von uns hin
   Solch Unvernunft, richt unsern Sinn,
   Daß wir zur Dankbarkeit
   Mit Lobgesang und sißem Ton
   Uns finden stets vor deinem Thron.

12. Nicht unserm Werk, nicht unsern Tun,
   Allein dir, dir, o Gnadenbrunnen,
   Gebührt all Ehr und Ruhm.
   Wir haben Zorn und Tod verschuldet,
   Du zahltest uns mit Lieb und Huld.

13. Laß diese Lieb, als eine Glut,
   In uns entzünden Herz und Mut,
   Gib engelische Brust,
   Daß alle unsre Ardelein
   Zu singen dir bereitet sein.

14. Laß auch einmal nach so viel Leid
   Uns wieder seheinen untre Freude,
   Des Friedens Angesitz,
   Das manchen Mensch noch nie einmal
   Geshaunt in diesem Jammertal.

15. Sind wirs nicht wert, so sieh doch an
   Die, so kein Unrecht je getan,
   Die kleinen Kinderlein;
   Solln sie denn in der Wiegen noch
   Mittragen solches schweres Joch?

16. Erbarm dich, o barmherziges Herz,
   So vieler Seufzer, die der Schmerz
   Uns aus dem Herzen zwinge.
   Du bist ja Gott und nicht ein Stein,
   Wie kannst du denn so harte sein?

17. Wir sind an bösen Wunden krank,
   Voll Eiter, Striemen, Kot und Stank,
   Du Herr bist unser Arzt!
   Geuß ein, geuß ein dein Gnadenßl,
   So wird geheilte Leib und Seel.

18. Nun, du wirst uns, das glauben wir,
   Obgleich noch wenig sehein für
   Die Mittel in der Welt.
   Wenn alle Mittel stille stehn,
   Dann pflegt dein Helfen anzugehn.
1. Gott Lob! Nun ist erschollen
Das edle Fried- und Freudenwort,
Daß nunmehr ruhen sollen
Die Spieß und Schwerte und ihr Mord.
Wohlauf und nimm nun wieder
Dein Saitenspiel hervor,
O Deutschland, und sing Lieder
Im hohen vollen Chor.
Erhebe dein Gemüte
Zu deinem Gott und sprich:
Herr, deine Gnade und Güte
Bleibt dennoch ewiglich!

2. Wir haben nichts verdienter
Als schwere Straf und großen Zorn,
Weil stets noch bei uns grünet
Der freche schnöde Sündendorn.
Wir sind fürwahr geschlagen
Mit harter, scharfer Rut,
Und dennoch muß man fragen:
Wer ist, der Buße tut?
Wir sind und bleiben böse,
Gott ist und bleibt treu,
Hilft, daß sich bei uns löse
Der Krieg und sein Geschrei.

3. Sei tausendmal willkommen,
Du teure werte Friedensgab!
Jetzt sehn wir, was für Frommen
Dein Bei-uns-wohnen in sich hab;
In dir hat Gott versenket
All unser Glück und Heil.
Wer dich betrübt und kränkst,
Der drückt sich selbst den Pfeil
Des Herzleids in das Herze
Und löscht aus Unverstand
Die gülnden Freudenkerze
Mit seiner eignen Hand.

4. Das drückt uns niemand besser
In unser Herz und Seel hinein
Als ihr zerstörten Schlösser
Und Städte voller Schutt und Stein;
Ihr vormals schönen Felder
Mit frischer Saat bestreut,
Jetzt aber lauter Wälder
Und dürre wüste Heid;
Ihr Grüber voller Leichen
Und blutgen Heldenwäßer
Der Helden, derengleichen
Auf Erden man nicht weiß.

5. Hier trübe deine Sinnen,
O Mensch, und laß die Tränenbach
Aus beiden Augen rinnen,
Geh in dein Herz und denke nach:
Was Gott bisher gesendet,
Das hast du ausgelacht,
Nun hat er sich gewendet
Und wärlich bedacht,
Vom Grimm und scharfen Dringen
Zu deinem Heil zu ruhn,
Ob er dich möchte zwingen
Mit Liebe und Guteslun.

6. Adh, laß dich doch erwecken,
Wach auf, wach auf, du harte Welt,
Erh als das harte Schrecken
Dich schnell und plötzlich überfällt!
Wer aber Christum liebet,
Sei unerschrocknes Muts,
Der Friede, den er gibt,
Bedeutet alles Gutes.
Er will die Lehre geben:
Das Ende naht herzu,
Da sollt ihr bei Gott leben
In ewgem Fried und Ruh.
1. Die Zeit ist nunmehr nah,
Herr Jesu, du bist da.
Die Wunder, die den Leuten
Dein Ankunft sollen deuten,
Die sind, wie wir gesehen,
In großer Zahl gesehen.

2. Was soll ich denn nun tun?
Ich soll auf dem beruhn,
Was du mir hast verheißen,
Daß du mich wohlt reißen
Aus meines Grabes Kammer
Und allem andern Jammer.

3. Ach Jesu, wie so schön
Wird mirs alsdann ergehn!
Du wirst mit taulend Blicken
Mich durch und durch erquicken,
Wenn ich hier von der Erde
Mich zu dir schwingen werde.

4. Ach, was wird doch dein Wort,
O süßer Seelenhort,
Was wird doch dein dein Sprechen,
Wenn dein Herz aus wird brechen
Zu mir und meinen Brüdern
Als deinen Liebesgliedern.

5. Werde ich denn auch vor Freud
In solcher Gnadenzeit
Den Augen ihre Zähren
Und tränen können wehren,
Daß sie mir nicht mit Haufen
Auf meine Wangen laufen?

6. Was für ein schönes Licht
Wird mir dein Angesicht,
Das ich in jenem Leben
Werd erstmal sehen, geben!
Wie wird mir deine Güte
Entzücken mein Gemüt!}

7. Dein Augen, deinen Mund,
Den Leib, der noch verwund,
Da wir so fast auf trauen,
Das werde ich alles schauen,
Auch innig herzlich grüßen
Die Mal an Händ und Füßen.

8. Dir ist allein bewußt
Die ungefährliche Lust
Und edle Seelenweise
In deinem Paradies.
Die kannst du wohl beschreiben,
Ich kann nichts mehr als gläuben.

9. Doch was ich hie geglauft,
Das steht gewiß und bleibt
Mein Teil, dem gar nicht gleichen
Die Güter aller Reichend;
All andres Gut vergeht,
Mein Erbteil, das bestehen.

10. Ach Herr, mein schönstes Gut,
Wie wird sich all mein Blut
In all dem Adern freuen
Und auf das Neu erneuen,
Wenn du mir wirst mit Lachen
Die Himmelstür aufmachen!

11. Komm her, komm und empfind,
O außerwöhles Kind,
Komm, schmecke, was für Gaben
Ich und mein Vater haben,
Komm, wirst du sagen, weide
Dein Herz in ewiger Freude!

12. Ach, du so arme Welt,
Was ist dein Gold und Geld
Hier gegen diese Kronen
Und mehr als günstnen Thronen,
Die Christus hingestellet
Dem Volk, das ihm gefällt.

13. Hie ist der Engel Land,
Der selgen Seelen Stand;
Hie hör ich nichts als singen,
Hie seh ich nichts als springen,
Hie ist kein Kreuz, kein Leiden,
Kein Tod, kein bittres Scheiden.

14. Halt ein, mein schwacher Sinn,
Halt ein! Wo denkst du hin?
Willst du, was grundlos, gründen?
Was unbegreißlich, finden?
Hier muß der Witz sich neigen
Und alle Redner schweigen.

15. Dich aber, meine Zier,
Dich laß ich nicht von mir;
Dein will ich stets gedenken,
Herr, der du mir wirst schenken
Mehr als mit meiner Seelen
Ich wünschen kann und zählen.

16. Ach, wie ist mir so weh,
Eh ich dich aus der Höh,
Herr, sehe zu uns kommen!
Ach, daß zum Hel der Frommen
Du meinen Wunsch und Willen
Noch mödest heut erfüllen!

Mir ziemt nur, stets bereit
Und fertig dazusehen
Und so zum Herrn zu gehen,
Daß alle Stunden und Tage
Mein Herr mich zu dir trage.

18. Dies gib, Herr, und verleih,
Auf daß dein Huld und Treu
Ohn Unterlaß mich wecke,
Daß mich dein Tag nicht schrecke,
Da unser Schreck auf Erden
Soll Fried und Freude werden.
HERR, WAS HAST DU IM SIND?

1. Herr, was hast du im Sinn?
Wo denkt dein Eifer hin?
Von was für neuen Plagen
Soll uns der Himmel sagen?
Was soll uns armen Leuten
Der neue Stern bedeuten?

2. Die Zeichen in der HüH
Erwecken Ach und Weh,
Es hat in nächsten Jahren
Die ganze Welt erfahren:
Die brennenden Kometen
Sind traurige Propheten.

3. Sie brennen in der Luft,
Und unser Herzens Kluf
Ist blind und kalt zum Guten,
Erkenne nicht die Ruten,
Die uns zu unsern Wunden
Des höchsten Hand gebunden.

4. Kein Mensche hört fast mehr,
Was Gottes Geist uns lehr
In seinen heilgen Worten;
Dram muß an so viel Orten
Von großem Zorn und Dräuen
Das Sternenland selbst schreien.

5. Die Welt hält keine Zucht,
Der Glaub ist in der Flucht,
Die Treu ist hart gebunden,
Die Wahrheit ist verschwunden
Barmherzig sein und lieben,
Das sieht man selten üben.

6. Daher wächst Gottes Grimm
Und dringt mit Ungestüm
Aus seines Eifers Kammer
Und will mit großen Jammer,
Wo wir uns nicht behelfen,
Uns allesamt verheeren.

7. Und das will der Prophet,
Der in der Luft da steht,
Uns, die wir sicher leben,
Klar zu verschehen geben
Mit seinem hellen Lichts
und klarem Angesichte.

8. Sein Lauf ist gar geschwind.
Ach, Gott, laß unsere Sünd
Uns nicht geschwind hinrückten
Und elends unterdrücken;
Laß uns der Strafen Haufen
Nicht plötzlich überlaufen!

9. Sein Strahl ist breit und lang,
Macht uns fast augst und bang,
Ach, Jesu, hilf uns allen,
Auf das nicht auf uns fallen
Die bodenbrüten Zahlen
Der letzten Zornenschalen.

10. Erhalt uns untern Herrn,
Den schönen edlen Stern,
Laß uns sein Licht beleuchten,
Laß seinen Tau uns feuchten,
Daß wir uns seiner freuen
Und unter ihm gedeihen.

11. Laß auch noch immerfort
Dein liebes wertes Wort
In unserm Land und Grenzen
Schön rün und helle glänzen;
Wenn dein Wort uns nur blicket,
So sind wir guug erquicket.

12. Gedenk an deine Güt
Und laß doch dein Gemüt
Erweichen von uns Armen!
Regier uns mit Erbarmen,
Damit die bösen Zeichen
Ein gutes End erreichen!
O HERRSCHER IN DEM HIMMELSZEIT

1. O Herrscher in dem Himmelszelt,
Was ist es doch, das unser Feld
Und was es uns hervorgebracht,
So ungestalt und traurig macht?

2. Nichts anders, traun, als daß die Schar
Der Menschen sich so ganz und gar
Bis in den tiefsten Grund verkehrt
Und täglich ihre Schuld vermehrt.

3. Die, so, als Gottes Eigentum,
Stets preisen sollten Gottes Ruhm
Und lieben seines Wortes Kraft,
Sind gleich der blinden Heidenschaft.

4. Drum wird uns auch der Himmel blind,
Des Firmamentes Glanz verschwind’t,
Wir warten, wann der Tag anbricht,
Aufs Tageslicht und kommt doch nicht.

5. Man zankt noch immer fort und fort,
Es bleibt Krieg an allem Ort,
In allen Winkeln Haß und Neid,
In allen Ständen Streitigkeit.

6. Drum strecken auch all Element
Hier wider uns aus ihre Händ,
Angst kommt uns aus der Tief und See
Angst kommt uns aus der Luft und Höh.

7. Es ist ein hochbetrübte Zeit;
Man plagt und jagt die armen Leut,
Eh als es Zeit, zur Grube zu
Und gönnet ihnen keine Ruh.

8. Drum trauert auch der Freudenquell,
Die Sonn, und scheint uns nicht so hell;
Die Wolken gießen allzumeal
Die Tränen ohne Maß und Zahl.

9. Ach, wein auch du, o Menschenkind,
Und traure über deine Sünd;
Halt doch von deinen Lastern ein
Und mache dich durch Buße rein.

10. Fall auf die Knie, fall in die Arm
Des Herrn, daß sich sein Herz erbarm
Und der so wohl verdienten Rach
In Gnaden bald ein Ende mach!

11. Er ist ja fromm und bleibt fromm,
Begeht nichts mehr, als daß man komm
Und mit geneigter Furcht und Scheu
Ihn bitt um Gnad und Vaterreu.

12. Ach Vater, Vater, höre doch
Und lös uns aus dem Sündenjoch
Und zeuch uns aus der Welt herfür
Und kehr uns selbsten du zu dir!

13. Erweise unsern harten Mut
Und mach uns Böse fromm und gut;
Wen du bekehrst, der wird bekehrt,
Und wer dich hört, der wird erhört.

14. Laß deine Augen freundlich sein
Und nimm mit gnädigen Ohren ein
Das Angstgeschrei, das von der Erd
Aus unserem Herzen zu dir führt.

15. Reiß weg das schwarze Zornsgewand,
Erquieke uns und unser Land
Und der so schönen Früchte Kranz
Mit süßem, warmem Sonnenglanz.

16. Verleih uns bis in unsern Tod
Alltäglich unser liebes Brot
Und dermaleinst nach dieser Zeit
Das sühne Brot der Ewigkeit!
1. Johannes sahe durch Gesicht
   Ein edles Licht
   Und liebliches Gemälde:
   Er sah ein Haufen Völker stehn,
   Sehr hell und schön,
   Im güldnen Himmelsfelde.
     Ihr Herz und Mut
     Schwebt in dem Gut,
     Das hier kein Mann
     Bezahlen kann
   Mit allem Gut und Gelde.

2. Sie trugen Palmen in der Hand;
   Ihr Ort und Stand
   War vor dem Lammes Throne,
   Ihr Mund war voller Lob und Preis,
   Die Kleider weiß,
   Ihr Lied, im höheren Tone,
     Klang süß und sang
     Des Höchsten Dank,
     Und dieser Stimm
     Half um und um
   Der Engel heilige Krone.

3. Wer, sprach Johannes, sind doch die,
   Die ich allhie
   In weisem Schmuck selb halten?
   Es sind, antwortet aus der Schar,
   Die um ihn war,
   Der eine von den Alten:
     Es sind, mein Sohn,
     Die sich den Hohn
     Und Spott der Welt
     Von Gottes Zelt
   Nicht lassen abhalten.

4. Es sind die, so vor dieser Zeit
   In großem Leid
   Auf Erden sich befunden,
   Die bei des Herren Ehr
   Und seiner Lehr
   All Angst und Trübsalzunten,
     Zwar ohne Schuld,
     Doch mit Geduld,
     Durch Gott gekühlt,
     Recht wohl gefühlt
   Und fröhlich überwunden.

5. Dieselben haben all ihr Kleid,
   Als treue Leut,
   Im Glaubensbad erkläret;
   Sie haben sich der Hülle List,
   So viel der ist,
   Mit starkem Mut erwehret
     Und nicht geacht
     Der Erden Pracht,
     Des Lammes Blut
   Zu ihrem Gut
   Erwählt und begehrn.

6. Darum so stehen sie auch nun
   Und all ihr Tun
   Wo Gottes Tempel steht;
   Der Tempel, da man Tag und Nacht
   Dem Höchsten wacht
   Und seinen Ruhn erhöhet;
     Da leben sie
     Ohn alle Müh,
     Ohn alle Qual
     Im Freundsaaal,
   Der nimmermehr vergischt.

7. Daselbst sitzt Gott in seinem Haus
   Und breiten aus
   Die Hütte seiner Güte
   Und deckt mit sanfter Wollust zu
   In stiller Ruh
   Mandch trauriges Gemüte.
     Was Freude gibt,
     Dem Herzen liebt,
     Die Augen füllt,
     Das Sehen stillt,
   Steht da in voller Blüte.

8. Da ist kein Durst, kein Hungersnot,
   Das Himmlersbrod
   Läßt keinen Mangel leiden,
   Da scheint die Sonne keinem mehr
   Zu heiß und sehr,
   Ihr Glanz bringt lauter Freuden.
     Die Himmlersson
     Und Herzenswon
     Ist unser Hirt,
     Der große Wirt
   Und Herr der ewgen Weiden.

9. Das Lamm wird weiden seine Herd,
   Als sichs begehrn,
   Auf Axen, die schön prangn;
   Es wird sie leiten zu dem Quell,
   Der frisch und hell,
   Das Heil draus zu erlangen;
     Und wird gewiß
     Nicht ruhen, bis
     Er uns erfrisch
     Und abgewischt
   Die Tränen unserer Wangen.
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Opitz, Martin

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