

Of the Father's Love Begotten, #162, by Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, AD 400.

This ancient Latin hymn was written by a Christian man named Aurelius Clemens Prudentius around the year AD 400.

This hymn is one of the oldest hymns in our hymnal, because it was written one thousand six hundred years ago! The words anyway.

The musical tune is only 900 years old, and was arranged into this exact form only 100 years ago.

The author was born in Spain in the year AD 348. There had been 300 years of persecution, but not long before his birth, something significant changed. The Roman Empire changed its stance on Christianity, and made it legal, which means legally accepted and therefore protected. Persecution would decrease drastically.

Mr. Prudentius became a lawyer and a governor of a state in Spain. His leadership skills got the attention of the Roman Emperor, who at that time was Theodosius I. The emperor appointed him to be the commander of a military post for the Roman Empire.

It seems that shortly after he became commander of a military station, he was converted. Right away, he began to write poetry about his faith and about Christianity.

When Mr. Prudentius reached the age of 57, he was able to retire from working for the government and entered a monastery. Monasteries at that time were farms out in the country where people went to study the Bible. He devoted himself to praying and writing more poetry. We have almost 400 poems from Mr. Prudentius, the Commander of a Roman military post who turned into a monk!

Some have called Mr. Prudentius “the prince of early Christian poets.”

Now you might not have heard of Prudentius, but you probably have heard the name of another man who was writing Christian poems and Christian hymns during the same time. His name is Ambrose of Milan, Italy.

The writings of Prudentius are more reflective, displaying greater warmth and glow.

One thing to note in this hymn is the use of tautology, which is the repetition of an idea with different words for emphasis. There is a wonderful one in verse 1, which reads like this, “He is Alpha and Omega, He the source, the ending he. Of the things that are, that have been, and that future years shall see....”

Because the hymn mentions the birth of Christ, it could be sung at Christmas, but it is only one line out of five, so we need not restrict this to Christmas. In fact, our connection to this evening's sermon is the fourth verse, that He is King, and the fifth verse, that He gives us the victory.

Enjoy the refrain on the end of each line evermore and evermore.