

Two Hymns on a Tune

by Claude Goudimel

The French composer, publisher, and music theorist Claude Goudimel (1514-1572) wrote numerous masses, motets, and secular *chansons*, but he is most famous for his four-part settings of the metrical psalms of the *Genevan Psalter*. His tune to accompany Psalm 86 is the setting for the two texts included in this publication.

“To My Humble Supplication” is itself a paraphrase and expansion of the first six verses of that psalm, written by Joseph Bryan (ca. 1620), of whom little is known. Bryan’s text — a plea for encouragement and guidance, and an acknowledgment of God’s goodness — is especially appropriate for penitential seasons and occasions:

1. To my humble supplication, Lord, give ear and acceptation;
Save thy servant that hath none help, nor hope, but Thee alone.
Send, O send relieving gladness to my soul, opprest with sadness,
Which from clog of earth set free wing'd with zeal, flies up to Thee.
2. To Thee, rich in mercies' treasure, and in goodness without measure,
Never failing help to those who on thy sure help repose.
Heav'nly Tutor, of thy kindness, teach my dullness, guide my blindness,
That my steps thy path may tread which to endless bliss do lead.

“Virgin-Born, We Bow Before Thee,” by the English bishop and hymn-writer (“Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty,” “Brightest and Best”) Reginald Heber (1783-1826), is both a hymn of adoration to the virgin-born Son of God and a hymn of praise for the unique role of Mary, his mother, in the Christ-Child’s birth and upbringing. It is especially appropriate to commemorate the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (February 2) and the Annunciation to Mary (March 25), as well as in Christmas-tide and Epiphany seasons:

1. Virgin-born, we bow before thee: blessed was the womb that bore thee;
Mary, Mother meek and mild, blessed was she in her Child.
Blessed was the breast that fed thee; blessed was the hand that led thee;
Blessed was the parent's eye that watched thy slumb'ring infancy.
2. Blessed she by all creation, who brought forth the world's salvation, and
Blessed they, forever blest, who love thee most and serve thee best.
Virgin-born, we bow before thee; blessed was the womb that bore thee;
Mary, Mother meek and mild, blessed was she in her Child.