

# AUGUST CRULL

## Translator of Hymns & Editor of Hymnals

BORN: **JANUARY 27, 1845** *Rostock, Grand-Duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin*

DIED: **FEBRUARY 17, 1923** *Milwaukee, Wis.*

**AUGUST CRULL WAS BORN IN GERMANY** but moved to the United States around age 10 with his mother and stepfather, Albert Friedrich Hoppe, who later became the editor of the St. Louis edition of *Luther's Works*. Crull entered the pastoral ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod after graduating from Concordia College, Fort Wayne, in 1862 and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL), in 1865. After only a year as an assistant pastor in Milwaukee, ill-health forced Crull to resign. He returned to Germany, but C.F.W. Walther (synodical founder and

president of CSL) encouraged him to return, already impressed by Crull's skill in translating German hymns into English. Crull did so, and he served briefly as the director of a Lutheran high school in Milwaukee and then as a pastor in Grand Rapids, Mich., before finally moving in 1873 to Fort Wayne to become a professor of German language and literature at the synodical preparatory school (high school and junior college). There he remained until his retirement in 1915 when he moved back to Milwaukee.

Crull published a German-language grammar book in 1880; a book of devotions, *Das Walte Gott*, based on sermons by Walther, in 1893; and two volumes of German poetry. But he made his mark in the Synod's history as a translator of hymns and as the editor of the Synod's first significant English hymnal. His lifelong project of making Lutheran hymns available in the English language passed its first milestone when he published a collection of 130 hymns in English in 1879. But it was the Norwegian Synod not the Missouri Synod that produced Crull's first collection. In 1886, however, Concordia Publishing House (CPH) published its own collection of 33 hymns in English, also edited by Crull.

Just two years later, Crull presented a manuscript of 400(!) hymns to the first convention of the English Lutheran Conference (soon to be known as the English Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri and Other States). That collection included about 200 translations from German (including 30 by Crull himself) and 200 English originals. It was published in 1889 as the *English Lutheran Hymn Book*. In subsequent editions, later editors added more hymns as well as liturgical materials. In 1911, the English Synod merged with the Missouri Synod to become the LCMS English District, and the next year CPH published a revised and expanded edition of Crull's original work, the Synod's first English-language hymnal.

After suffering severe mental health problems in retirement, Crull passed away in 1923. Nonetheless, 14 of his hymn translations are in the Synod's *Lutheran Service Book*, including favorites like "Come, Thou Precious Ransom, Come" (LSB 350) and "Jesus, I Will Ponder Now" (LSB 440).

**For more information about the 175th anniversary of the LCMS, visit [lcms.org/175](https://lcms.org/175).**

### DISCOVER MORE

Jon D. Vieker, "*August Crull and His Legacy as Lutheran Hymnal Editor and Translator*," *CrossAccent: Journal of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians* 16, no. 3 (2008), 39–51.

Jon D. Vieker, *August Crull and the Story of the Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book (1912)* (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2013).



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ONLY JESUS  
NO OTHER NAME  
— 175 YEARS —

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