



July 1

Commemorations: John Mason Neale, 1866, hymn translator

Neale was born in London, his parents being the Revd Cornelius Neale and Susanna Neale, daughter of John Mason Good. He was educated at Sherborne School, Dorset, and Trinity College, Cambridge, where (despite being said to be the best classical scholar in his year) lack of ability in mathematics prevented him taking an honours degree.

Neale was named after the Puritan cleric and hymn writer John Mason (1645–1694), of whom his mother Susanna was a descendant.

At the age of 22 Neale was the chaplain of Downing College, Cambridge. At Cambridge he was affected by the Oxford Movement and helped to found the Cambridge Camden Society (afterwards known as the Ecclesiological Society). Though he was ordained in 1841, ill health prevented his settling in England until 1846, when he became warden of Sackville College, an alms-house at East Grinstead, an appointment which he held until his death.

In 1854 Neale co-founded the Society of Saint Margaret, an order of women in the Church of England dedicated to nursing the sick. Many Anglicans in his day, however, were very suspicious of anything suggestive of Roman Catholicism. Only nine years earlier, John Henry Newman had encouraged Catholic practices in Anglican churches and had ended up becoming a Roman Catholic. This encouraged the suspicion that anyone such as Neale was an agent of the Vatican, assigned to destroy Anglicanism by subverting it from within. Once Neale was attacked and mauled at a funeral of one of the Sisters. From time to time unruly crowds threatened to stone him or to burn his house. He received no honour or preferment in England, and his doctorate was bestowed by Trinity College (Connecticut). However, his basic goodness eventually won the confidence of many who had fiercely opposed him, and the Sisterhood of St Margaret survived and prospered.

He was also the principal founder of the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association, a religious organization founded as the Anglican and Eastern Orthodox Churches Union in 1864.

Neale was strongly high church in his sympathies, and had to endure a good deal of opposition, including a fourteen years' inhibition by his bishop. Neale translated the Eastern liturgies into English, and wrote a mystical and devotional commentary on the Psalms. However, he is best known as a hymn writer and, especially, translator, having enriched English hymnody with many ancient and mediaeval hymns translated from Latin and Greek. More than anyone else, he made English-speaking congregations aware of the centuries-old tradition of Latin, Greek, Russian, and Syrian hymns. *The English Hymnal* (1907) contains 63 of his translated hymns and six original hymns by Neale. His translations include:

All Glory, Laud, and Honour

Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle

To Thee Before the Close of Day

O come, O come, Emmanuel

Of the Father's Heart Begotten