Great Hymns
And Their Writers

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Appendices

Jehovah Tsidkenu
by Robert Murray McCheyne.

(1)
I once was a stranger to grace and to God;
I knew not my danger and felt not my load;
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree
"Jehovah Tsidkenu"* – was nothing to me.

(2)
Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll,
I wept when the waters went over His soul;
Yet thought not that my sins had nailed to the tree
"Jehovah Tsidkenu" was nothing to me.

(3)
When free grace awoke me, by light from on high,
Then legal fears shook me, I trembled to die;
No refuge, no safety, in self could I see;
"Jehovah Tsidkenu" my Saviour must be.

(4)
My terrors all vanished before the sweet name;
My guilty fears banished with boldness I came
To drink at the fountain, life-giving and free;
"Jehovah Tsidkenu" is all things to me.

(5)
Ev'en treading the valley, the shadow of death,
this watchword shall rally my faltering breath;
For when from life's fever my God sets me free,
"Jehovah Tsidkenu" my death-song shall be.

* *"Jehovah Tsidkenu"*
The Lord our Righteousness.

A popular tune for this hymn is "Jehovah Tsidkenu"

It was on the 18th November 1843, while recovering from a bout of the fever that was to cut short his life in its thirtieth year, that Robert Murray McCheyne wrote the words of his famous hymn which serve as a window to his thoughts in the great matter of his soul's salvation.

McCheyne was an "upright sinner" in the early years of his life and, indeed, he tells us, was often mistaken for a Christian on account of his religious way of living. But, his "righteousness" was his own "self-righteousness," and any thought of needing Christ's righteousness and merits to atone for his sins had not yet manifest itself to his mind and heart.

> "I once was a stranger to grace and to God,
> I knew not my danger, and felt not my load:
> Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,
> Jehovah Tsidkenu was nothing to me."

For all his open religion, McCheyne was "a stranger" both to the grace of God and the God of grace. And the reason he remained a stranger was on

account of the absence of any burden of sin such as had lain heavily on the shoulders of old John Bunyan's Pilgrim. He had, as yet, in no sense of "danger." That he was "by nature" among "the children of wrath, even as others;" and where there is no knowledge of any danger from the wrath to come, there is no fleeing from that wrath. His own righteousness – his own works – his own efforts – his own religion – was sufficient for him at this point in his life, and the righteousness of God – "Jehovah Tsidkneu" (The Lord, my Righteousness) as he says, "meant nothing to me."

Oh yes, McCheyne could be "affected" by the Cross and the thought of Christ dying there; and how we need to appreciate this facet of our human nature in our modern-day approach to evangelism, for not everyone who is "affected" by the death of Christ is "saved" by the death of Christ. Listen to what McCheyne tells us:

"Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll,
I wept when the waters went over His soul
Yet thought not that my sins had nailed to the tree
Jehovah Tsidkenu – 'twas nothing to me."

How "affected", indeed, this hardened sinner was by the general doctrine of the blood-stained Cross of the dear Son of God, but there was, as yet, no particular application of that cross to his own heart. He had yet to learn the truth, "Jesus who loved me, and gave himself for me." He had still to bow under the burden of guilt that it was he who had "pointed the nail, and fixed the thorn."

But, "exalt free grace," McCheyne seems to be saying to us as he comes to the turning point in his hymn, which relates the same turning point in his life. How does the sinner begin to see the "danger" that he is in by nature when under the condemnation and wrath of God? Only when God's most Holy Law begins to shudder and shake the sin-hardened conscience so that we realise that "it is appointed unto men once to die, and after death the judgment." And this "Law Work" – let us never forget it – is the prerogative working of God's Holy Spirit in the lives of those "vessels of mercy … afore prepared unto glory."

"When free grace awoke me, by light from on high," says McCheyne. For the grace that "awakens" the self-righteous sinner to see his need of the righteousness of God in Christ to save his soul is just as sovereign and free as every other grace that comes to him from the Hand of Omnipotence:

"When free grace awoke me by light from on high,
Then legal fears shook me"
(the mighty Law of God was having its perfect work)

"I trembled to die;
No refuge, no safety in self could I see –
Jehovah Tsidkenu, my Saviour, must be."

This is the course that McCheyne's pilgrimage in salvation took. From the sinner depending on his own self-righteousness to the saint depending on nothing short of the very righteousness of God itself. This alone underlies the God-honouring life that this choice servant of God lived, and which must motivate every professing child of God that would live righteously in Christ Jesus. Not my own righteousness, but the Lord's righteousness, this alone brings the guilty sinner before the face of the God against whom he has sinned in thought, word, and deed; that he is "accepted in the Beloved," and that the Name of Christ is the password of heaven that gains him entrance at last. So McCheyne discovered.

"Even treading the valley, the shadow of death,
This 'Watchword' shall rally my faltering breath;
For while from life's fever my God sets me free,
Jehovah Tsidkenu my death-song shall be."

This Watchword, says McCheyne, for, indeed, he entitled his hymn, "Jehovah Tsidkenu – The Watchword of the Reformers," and, it was that very thing. Ask Luther, or Calvin, or Knox where their hope of salvation lay; ask them as they handle the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; ask them as they pass through the valley of the shadow of death. Their answer is McCheyne's answer: This Watchword shall rally my faltering breath – Jehovah Tsidkenu, The Lord my righteousness.

As another great hymn puts it:

"I stand upon His merits,
I know no other stand
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

Not only in this life is there but one true refuge for the soul – one covering for our sin – one shelter in a time of storm, But –

"When from life's fever, my God sets me free,

Jehovah Tsidkenu my death-song shall be."

Two other verses of the original hymn which don't appear in the average hymn book also speak clearly the same doctrine of our acceptance before God only through the merits of Christ.

"I oft' read with pleasure, to sooth or engage,
Isaiah's wild measure and John's simple page;
But e'en when they pictured the blood-sprinkled tree,
Jehovah Tsidkenu seemed nothing to me.

Jehovah Tsidkenu! My treasure and boast,
Jehovah Tsidkenu! I ne'er can be lost;
In Thee, I shall conquer by flood and by field –
My cable, my anchor, my breastplate and shield!"

Amen

"God moves in a mysterious way"
By William Cowper.

(1)
How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.

(2)
It makes the wounded spirit whole,
And calms the troubled breast;
'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
And to the weary rest.

(3)
Dear name! the Rock on which I build,
My Shield and Hiding-place;
My never-failing Treasury, filled
With boundless stores of grace.

(4)
Jesus, my Shepherd, Husband, Friend,
My Prophet, Priest and King;
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
Accept the praise I bring.

(5)
Weak is the effort of my heart,
And cold my warmest thought;
But when I see Thee as Thou art,
I'll praise Thee as I ought.

(6)
Till then I would Thy love proclaim,
My Shield and Hiding-place;
My never-failing Treasury, filled
With boundless stores of grace.

A popular tune for this hymn is "Irish"

It was that grand old man of the commentary, Matthew Henry, who coined the phrase, "He who notes providences, will have providences to note." In other words, he who looks for and recognises God's almighty hand working in his life will live to see that his life is guarded and kept by the power of Omnipotence. This is a truth that should find ready acceptance with every child of God, and few have expressed the glories of providence more skillfully and beautifully than the gentle William Cowper. The theme of his hymn that we note is the song of God's elect people in all generations. Joseph is sold into Egypt, purchased as a slave and imprisoned as a criminal, but, if God is moving in "a mysterious way," then, He is moving in a mysterious way "His wonders to perform." God has "sent him on to preserve life," and although young Joseph's brothers "meant it unto him for evil, God meant it unto him for good." The Apostle Paul, confined in a Roman prison can, still withal, write to the Philippian believers that the things which appeared so manifestly against him have "fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." The mighty "Tinker of Bedford," shut up in a

similar strait in a Bedford jail to keep him from preaching, sits down and writes his famous Pilgrim's Progress so that, three hundred years later he is still preaching as powerfully as ever.

And the earth would not contain the books that would be required to tell of God's "mysterious" ways in the lives of His redeemed children from generation to generation. Old John Gilpin, on his way to London to be burnt at the hands of that evil woman, "bloody" Mary, falls from his horse and breaks a leg and so, is forced to put up at an inn until he can continue his journey under the Queen's guard. But, by the time they reach London and are passing the very spot where Gilpin would have been martyred – Smithfield Market – the Coronation bells are beginning to ring out, for Elizabeth has come to the throne, and Mary has been banished forever.

And so with Cowper himself. The story is told that during a terrible bout of depression he vowed to end his life once and for all and set off for a lake near his home in order to drown himself in its cold waters. As he rode towards the lake, however, a fog descended, and he completely lost his way. He kept on riding until, to his amazement and soul's conviction he found himself when the fog had cleared, outside the front door of his own home once again. The words of his hymn came easily to his pen in such circumstances.

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm."

This is a theme-song of providence; a glorious paraphrase of those parting words of our Saviour to the disciples in that upper room: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Once let the saints of God go forth against the devil with this truth emblazoned upon their breastplates, and the old enemy of men's souls must withdraw his arrows of perplexity. For, in the midst of it all, the believer with this truth burnt into his heart knows that God is "performing wonders" for his spiritual well-being.

But, is this not a deficiency in much of our modern-day Christian thinking and practice, that, so often, we fail to stand amazed and overawed at what our God does "perform" on our behalf? We are all, at least a little tainted with that old devil's trinity, "Luck, Chance and Fortune." There's a bit of "practical atheism" with the most of us, for, we fail to trace everything to the Author and Finisher of our faith. Cowper shows nothing of this spirit as he

moves into the second verse of his hymn, but he clearly shows that he has cast himself upon a God who "doeth his will among the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."

"Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will."

This is what really determines our views of God's providential dealings with us in this life – with all that besets us: do we believe that when God works His will, He works His "Sovereign Will?" This alone, my friends, enables the trembling saint to "trace the rainbow through the rain" and remember, indeed, that "all things work together for good to them that love God." This is Cowper's sentiment in the next verse.

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head."

And what of the exhortations that Cowper delivers to us to depend on the Lord's gracious dealings in the latter half of his hymn! Perhaps we could pause here for a moment to consider the true nature of using our "talents" to God's own glory. William Cowper could have been numbered among the greatest of the English poets of his day, or any other day. But, unlike many Christian men of ability who turned their talents to the writing of the world's books and so, received the world's acclamation, the gentle recluse of Olney – together with his great friend and companion John Newton – contented himself with expressing the mighty doctrines of Grace in a form far beyond the talents of many.

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense," *he exhorts us*,
"But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face."

And surely, the majesty and simplicity of verse 5 are unsurpassed among the hymns of faith:

"His purposes shall ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower."

How "bitter" was providence "in the bud" to Joseph, and Paul, and Bunyan, and Gilpin, and a million more of the Lord's saints from time immemorial; but "how sweet the flower," when God had had His perfect work and the things which we thought to be against us "fell out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel."

How we need to cast ourselves in these days upon the arm of Omnipotence, for, not only are we dependant upon God's providences working together for our good, but we are dependant upon Him even to show us the truth of this. This is Cowper's final blow, in his last verse, for God's unquestionable sovereignty in the lives of His people:

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

Providence is the King's plan, and He will "make it plain." "He who notes providences will have providences to note."

Amen

"Amazing Grace! (How sweet the Sound!)" By John Newton

(1)
Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found:
Was blind but now I see.

(2)
'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

(3)
Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

(4)
The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures
He will my Shield and Portion be,
As long as life endures.

(5)
Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil
A life of joy and peace.

(6)
The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be for ever mine.

A popular tune for this hymn is "Amazing Grace"

John Newton, Clerk,
Once an infidel and libertine,
A servant of slaves in Africa,
Was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
Preserved, restored, pardoned,
And appointed to preach the faith He
Had long laboured to destroy...

It goes without saying, almost, that a man who could write such an epitaph for himself as the one which John Newton wrote above would be a man who would be more than persuaded that if he had been saved at all, then, he had been saved by the free, unmerited mercy and love of God; that he had been saved by Grace. And it's the theme of that saving grace that I want to look at as he tells of God's gracious dealings with him that astounded his soul and filled his heart with the music of mercy.

"Amazing grace! (How sweet the sound!)
That saved a wretch like me."

One of the deficiencies of our present mode of thinking with regards to the grace that saves our souls is that it fails to "amaze" us. We have learnt to take salvation for granted and forgotten that the free gospel was the most costly thing ever purchased by God. John Newton, was in no way mistaken about the wonder of his salvation because he viewed it in the light of his "wretchedness" before the Lord. As he says in his epitaph, he was an "infidel and libertine." He could boast that none could swear as he could. He did become "a servant of slaves in Africa," because at one point in his life he had sunk so low as to become a slave's slave. The grace, then, that "saved a wretch" like him was "amazing grace" and the sound of it was "sweet".

But, it's the "inner" wretchedness that Newton is especially speaking about here, and this is something every redeemed sinner ought to know something about and so, magnify the grace that has redeemed their soul: -

"I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see."

Newton was never "blind" as far as his physical eyesight goes, but he was inwardly blind until the Lord of Glory "anointed his eyes with eye salve" and "now I see," he says.

And how did he come to realise that he was spiritually "blind" and spiritually "lost"? Well, says Newton, it, too, was "by grace," for, as Paul says, "it's all of grace."

"Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved."

"Thou hast wounded and thou must heal," as the prophet humbly acknowledges before his God in heaven. Grace shows us our need of Christ and grace extends the hand of mercy to meet that need. No wonder Newton sings out in the last two lines of that verse –

"How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed."

It's only the believer in Christ who can see the preciousness of God's unmerited Sovereign grace that has brought redemption to his soul, but who, then, like the believer, should bow beneath the rod of God's Omnipotence, which is the sceptre of His grace. This is the theme of John Newton's testimony hymn. Grace has saved him, and grace will keep him:

"Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home."

And so on, to the end of the hymn. The great poet of Olney can write "How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds," and here is why he can write it; it's because grace has established its throne in his heart and he has learned through God's merciful dealings with him that "Christ is precious."

This is what is meant by "Sovereign" grace. Once it was Sovereign "Sin," – " as sin reigned unto death," says the great apostle Paul. But now, it's Sovereign Grace – "Even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Indeed, indeed, the grace of our redemption is "Amazing Grace." May its sound be sweet to our ears if we have received this "grace of God" from "the God of grace."

Amen

"Rock of Ages Cleft for me"
by Augustus Toplady

(1)
Rock of Ages! Cleft for me!
Let me hide myself in Thee:
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure;
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

(2)
Not the Labour of my hands
Can fulfil Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow;
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

(3)
Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress,
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Black! I to the fountain fly,
Help me Saviour, or I die.

(4)
While I draw this fleeting breath;
When my eye-strings break in death;
When I soar to worlds unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgment throne;
Rock of Ages, shelter me;
Let me hide myself in Thee!

A popular tune for this hymn is "Redhead no. 76"

Many stars shine brightly in the sky of Augustus Toplady's hymn writing. "A debtor to mercy alone, of Covenant mercy I sing," is a hymn that has a lustre almost beyond compare to cheer the darkest hour of the humblest saint – and especially the concluding verse that speaks of our security on earth as being every bit as secure as our security in heaven:

"And I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy but not more secure,
When glorified with Him in heaven."

"A Sovereign Protector I have" is a true and steadfast guiding light to the pilgrim's path, while, "From whence this fear and unbelief" sits glowing in the heavens pointing us to the sure and certain hope of the believer chosen in Christ from the foundation of the world and purchased unto everlasting life by the blood of the Redeemer:

"If Thou hast my discharge procured,
And freely in my place endured
The whole of wrath divine;
Payment God will not twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine."

And yet, it goes without saying, almost, that Toplady's "Rock of Ages" far outshines the rest in a sky full of gems.

The source of Toplady's great hymn is open to some speculation. The story goes that one day, when overtaken by a thunderstorm on Burrington Coombe, Toplady hid for shelter in the great rock which still stands in that place and was reminded of the place of refuge that he, as a believer, had in the riven side of Christ. Others believe that he gleaned the idea from reading a sermon of Daniel Brevint's where the words are cried out in prayer – "O Rock of Israel, Rock of salvation, Rock struck and cleft for…" etc. Perhaps, it was a combination of both. But, whatever the earthly source, we may be soundly persuaded that Toplady drew his images and figures from was the very Word of God itself for "The Lord Jehovah…The Rock of Ages" is the very language of Scripture and the theme of our salvation.

The hymn points us to the two great needs of the sinner as he comes to view himself in the light of God's justice – shelter from God's wrath and cleansing from his own sin. There is only one spot where he may find these necessities of redemption and that is in the eternal Rock of Ages:

"Rock of Ages cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."

Blessed thought that, "the double cure." Let us never forget that the gospel of Christ is not only a refuge but a hospital, as well. Not only a sanctuary where the guilty hell-deserving sinner may flee to escape the "wrath of a sin-hating God" – as Toplady puts it in another hymn – but a place of cleansing; so that we are not only saved from the penalty of sin but are being cleansed from the power of sin. Not only justified but also sanctified. Not only forgiven by the great Judge of all the earth but attended to by the Great

Physician of our souls. In the cleft of the Rock, which is Christ the Lord, there is, indeed, a "double cure" for all ills.

And "Neither is there salvation in any other," our author seems to be reminding us in his second verse:

"Not the labours of my hands,
Can fulfil Thy laws demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow;
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save and Thou alone."

All our works, all our zeal, all our tears on one side of the scales of eternal justice; God's Holy Law on the other – and we stand condemned. And if the sinner is ever going to be saved, then "Thou must save, and Thou alone."

Now, when Toplady wrote those words, he meant them. He didn't belong to that school who say that they believe that God must save the sinner and then tell the sinner that it all depends on him.

Toplady was an unapologetic Calvinist for he knew that the day of his salvation – when he had wandered into a country barn in Ireland and had been struck down in his conscience by an illiterate evangelist – was the Lord's doings and wondrous in his eyes. He was absolutely destitute of any saving merit, just as he is yet, apart from Christ:

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for Grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me Saviour, or I die."

Toplady has often been accused by literary men of using too many mixed metaphors – the refuge, the washing, the clinging, the fleeing. But there is another language - the language of Canaan – that far transcends any such analysis, and it is that language that is to the forefront here. The awakened sinner sinking in the sea of condemnation sees that there is nothing else to lay hold of but the cross of Christ rising out of the waters on a solid rock. There is no other covering for his nakedness but the robe of Christ's righteousness.

There is nothing short of God's unmerited grace to meet his helplessness, and there is no other fountain to wash away his foulness than that which was open on that day for sin and for uncleanness.

And at the hour of death, there is still but one place of safety for the believing soul:

"While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyes shall close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgment-throne;
Rock of Ages cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

Augustus Toplady died at the young age of thirty-eight; but he died as he lived, with praise in his mouth. "I enjoy heaven already in my soul," he whispered.

May we learn in our day that our safety is in the Rock that was cleft for us and not in any way on our own merits. "A believer never yet carved for himself," Toplady told his own mother, "but he cut his own finger." Learn, I say, that it is "all of grace" and then, we shall praise Him now and in eternity. "O my dove, that art in the cleft of the rock … let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."

Amen

"Who Would True Valour See"
by John Bunyan

(1)
Who would true valour see,
Let him come hither;
One here will constant be,
Come wind, come weather;
There's no discouragement
Shall make him once relent
His first avowed intent
To be a pilgrim.

(2)
Who so beset him round
With dismal stories,
Do but themselves confound;
His strength the more is.
No foes shall stay his might,
Though he with giants fight
He will make good his right
To be a pilgrim.

(3)
Since, Lord, Thou dost defend
Us with Thy Spirit.
We know we at the end
Shall life inherit.
Then fancies flee away!
I'll fear not what men say,
I'll labour night and day
To be a pilgrim.

A popular tune for this hymn is "Monks Gate"

The clash of the metal of warfare is never very far away from the lines of this three-hundred year old hymn, as, indeed, the author himself was no stranger to that battlefield that the Lord often calls His children to enter in the defence of His truth. John Bunyan spent twelve years in Bedford jail for his non-conformity, but it was during that time, in the mysterious Providence of God, that he wrote his famous Pilgrim's Progress in which this battle-hymn of non-conformity appears. The lines of the hymn are placed on the lips of one of the great characters of the book - Mr Valiant-for-truth; and we would make so bold as to assert that it is only those who have "shed some blood" in the defence of the gospel of redeeming grace that have any right to join their voices with Bunyan's steadfast warrior in echoing the sentiments that here fall from his lips.

Valiant-for-truth, of course, can be Bunyan himself, as can be Hopeful and Mr Ready-to-halt and Trust and Old Honest. It is the Pilgrim's Progress, and Bunyan himself is a pilgrim on his way to the heavenly City. Not only are the

characters of the book characters that the Pilgrim meets on his journey to that blessed place, but they are characteristics that the heaven-bound pilgrim faces in his own heart as he enters the strait gate and walks the narrow way. Valiant-for-truth, then, is Bunyan himself, thrust into the heavenly conflict, yet worthy to sing the praises of the great captain of his Salvation whom he has seen fly to his side and teach his hands to war as He upholds him in the heat of the day in that Bedfordian prison-house.

It is Mr Greatheart who invites these words of resolute refusal to compromise from Bunyan's Christian soldier. Greatheart has just come to the foot of Dark Lane and, as he arrives there, we are told, he finds a man standing "...with his sword drawn, and his face all blood." "Who art thou?" Greatheart asks the man. "I am one whose name is Valiant-for-truth," comes the reply, "I am a pilgrim, and going to the Celestial City." He then begins to tell Greatheart how he had been attacked by three men who had tried to turn him away from his pilgrimage, but he had fought with them, as he says, "for the space of above three hours. They have left upon me, as you can see," he tells Greatheart, "some of the marks of their valour, and have also carried away with them some of mine; but they are now fled.

"But here was great odds," says Greatheart, "three against one," "Tis true," says Valiant-for-truth, "but little or more are nothing to him that has the truth on his side ... I fought till my sword did cleave to my hand, and then they were joined together as if a sword grew out of my arm, and when the blood ran through my fingers, then I fought with most courage…

"Who would true valour see,
Let him come hither;
One here will constant be,
Come wind, come weather;
There's no discouragement
Shall make him once relent
His first avowed intent
To be a pilgrim."

And should we ask the reason why Mr Valiant-for-truth fought "for the space of above three hours," and used his sword until the blood ran through his fingers and the weapon cleaved to his hand, then, the answer is contained in this - that he was fighting for the gospel that had saved his soul. "I am of Dark Land," he tells his new-found friend, "for there was I born and there my father and mother are yet." But he had been called out of Dark Land, he goes on to

say, by one Mr Tell-true. It was the truth, you see, that had called him out of nature's darkness and had set his feet on the pilgrim path to glory, and so, he would stand against "great odds" – aye, against all odds, to fight for that truth.

The hymn belongs to the spiritual soldier, my brethren. To that man, or that woman, or that young person who has not only said "Set down my name, sir," as they have enlisted in the army of the Lord, but are prepared to take up arms against every sea of trouble that would threaten the well-being of the truth of their redemption's story. Would to God we would see a generation of believers who could hurl forth such an invitation as this with a clear conscience before all men –

"Who would true valour see,
Let him come hither."

Now, of course, John Bunyan, like all his Puritan breed, was absolutely practical in every application of redeeming truth to our hearts. The heat of the battle can be a comparatively easy position when set alongside those thoughts of desolation that arise in our hearts when it appears to the "natural" eye that the enemy has won the day and that the voice of defeat is already ringing in our ears. But Bunyan seems to offer one strange antidote for this aspect of battle, and it is this - "...a right

To be a Pilgrim."

"Whoso beset him round
With dismal stories,
Do but themselves confound;
His strength the more is.
No lion can him fright,
He'll with a giant fight,
But he will have a right
To be a pilgrim."

Bunyan was no mere theoretical soldier; he had been faced with manys a "dismal story" and had been afflicted by those "dismal" aspects of our Christianity that don't seem to have much currency in our present-day evangelical gospel. But, where do we find a more desolate and pathetic scene than that time when our author is being separated from wife and children to be led away "the prisoner of Jesus Christ" at Bedford jail? He didn't want to go from them, because, as he says in his Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners,

"… I should have often brought to my mind the many hardships, miseries, and wants that my poor family was like to meet with, should I be taken from them, especially my poor blind child, who lay nearer my heart than all besides." That little one, who had never seen her father in the flesh and now, would also be deprived of his tender presence in her life. That was a "dismal story." And the Castle called "Doubting" was not unfamiliar to Bunyan, neither was its great hulking occupant, Giant Despair. And yet, from these very things he'll draw his power to fight, both with "lions" and with "giants", for this is part of "his right to be a pilgrim." In scriptural terms, the doctrine reads like this: "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction," "Yea and all who shall live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." It's the very birth-right of the child of God to suffer, and he will know this birth-right the most keenly when he stands for that truth that has brought him to life in Christ.

Garrisoned again, then by this thought, Mr Valiant-for truth hurls out his challenge once again:

"Hobgoblin nor foul fiend
Can daunt his spirit;
He knows he at the end
Shall life inherit.
Then fancies fly away,
He'll care not what men say;
He'll labour night and day
To be a pilgrim."

Here is the great secret of running the Christian race, or fighting the Christian fight; we run, or fight, with the light of everlasting life in our eye, because everlasting life means life with Christ. Let a believer once get the light of heaven's glory into his heart and not all the powers of hell will turn him from the Christian conflict. For, he knows – although the battle may be sore at times –

"He knows he at the end
Shall life inherit."

Let all men rise up against him, He'll care not what men say," for in that great day when all the books are open, if he has stood in the defence of the glorious gospel of grace, he knows that he will receive the commendation that Valiant-for-truth received - "Thou has worthily behaved thy-self." What a "blessed indifference" that is, to be indifferent to what men have to say once we have

heard what God has had to say, and he has said that he has called us to be “set for the defence of the gospel.” “This was your victory, even your faith,” said Greatheart again, “it was so, “said Valiant-for-truth, “I believed, and therefore, came out, got into the way, fought all that set themselves against me, and, by believing, am come to this place.” “Thou, therefore, endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life: that he may please him who hath called him to be a soldier.”

(2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 3)

Amen

"From Whence This Fear & Unbelief?" by Augustus Toplady

(1)
From whence this fear and unbelief?
Hath not the Farther put to grief
His spotless Son for me?
And will the righteous Judge of men
Condemn me for that debt of sin
Which, Lord, was charged on Thee?

(2)
Complete atonement Thou has made,
And to the utmost farthing paid,
Whate'er Thy people owed;
How then can wrath on me take place,
If sheltered in Thy righteousness,
And sprinkled with Thy blood?

(3)
If Thou has my discharge procured,
And freely in my room endured
The whole of wrath Divine;
Payment God cannot twice demand ¬
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine.

(4)
Turn then, my soul, unto thy rest!
The merits of thy great High Priest
Have brought thy liberty;
Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear thy banishment from God
Since Jesus died for thee.

A popular tune for this hymn is "Innsbruck"

In an earlier issue of the magazine we looked at that great hymn of Augustus Toplady's, "Rock of Ages." In the course of the article we referred to another of Toplady's hymns, "From whence this Fear and Unbelief?" and such has been the response to that brief reference that we thought we would include the hymn with a few notes in this edition.

The hymn appears to have been written following a time of trial in Augustus Toplady's life. Strong Calvinist and all as our author was he, nevertheless, like every true saint of God, experienced those times in his life when his knees grew feeble and his arms weak.

When Pilgrim in Pilgrim's Progress had been shown around the House of Interpreter and had been asked what he thought of the wonders and mysteries of the Christian life that had been shown to him, his reply was that they both filled him "with hope and fear." And so the words of this great hymn reflect one such time in the life of its author when he was filled with fear. But, and this is the glory of it all, the words also expound the source of "hope" that is

eternally set forth to rescue the believer from all his times of "fear and unbelief."

"From whence this fear and unbelief,"
Since God my Father, put to grief
His spotless Son for me?
Can he, the righteous judge of men,
Condemn me for that debt of sin,
Which, Lord, was charged on Thee?"

Note how our author rides out to challenge that great two-headed dragon – "Fear and Unbelief" – that has come out and partly robbed him of his spiritual well-being. He lifts up the blood-stained cross of his Saviour before its glowing eyes so that it is forced to shrink back and retire into its lair again. "Who is he that condemneth?" Toplady is shouting out this first verse, "it is Christ that died." And this is the source of victory over all our anxious thoughts and unbelieving hearts, that "God spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all." See how Toplady places himself within the Courts of God's Justice.

The sentence has been written clearly above his head – "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." But a "surety" steps into that place of condemnation – even God's own Son – and he takes the full brunt of that sentence for him. Why should he then fear or be unbelieving? The "Judge" who sits upon the seat of judgement in that Courtroom is "the Righteous Judge". And, if He has accepted the payment of the "debt" by the surety on the condemned's behalf, then the condemned will never be condemned for that "debt of sin, which, Lord, was charged on Thee."

Not even a little? The old dragon of fear and unbelief may often suggest as a parting shot; will you not be condemned even a little? But Toplady lifts the Cross to its fullest height as he starts in upon his second verse to show, indeed, that "there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

"Complete atonement Thou hast made,
And to the utmost farthing paid,
Whate'er Thy people owed;
How, then, can wrath on me take place,
If sheltered in Thy righteousness,
And sprinkled with Thy blood."

Some would call this "high" doctrine, and, indeed it is – high as heaven itself – for it's Christ's atonement for the sins of His people that we are called to sing about here. One of the accusations that fell at the feet of the disciples after our Lord had expounded the nature of His sufferings and death to them was that "they understood none of these things." And it is still an indictment writ large across the Church's charter today that she has still, to a great extent failed to appreciate and preach the true nature of Christ's wondrous atonement. "Jesus who loved the church," says Paul, "and gave himself for it." "Thou shalt call his name Jesus," says the evangelist, "for he shall save his people from their sins." "The Son of Man is come to give his life a ransom for many," it says in another place. The old Calvinist, Toplady, might have called this "Limited Atonement" – that Christ's atonement was on behalf of His Church, His Bride, His People, His Sheep, His Elect, and for none else. And yet, here is the great and glorious paradox: that this so-called Limited atonement is the only "Complete atonement" that there is. Jesus has really paid the debt of His people's sins – "to the utmost farthing," says our author. "Charge it to mine account," says our blessed Saviour to His father in heaven who is seated upon His throne of judgement, "I will repay it." And He did – He really did!

But, believer, do you believe that Christ cancelled the debt of sin when He poured out His life an offering on the Cross? Whose debt, then? The debt of all the world, indiscriminately, say some. Ah then, my evangelical friend, if you believe that you are really a universalist after all, for you believe that all men have had their sins accounted for and the debt atoned for. But, it was "whate'er Thy people owed," says Toplady aright. And it was because Jesus paid every "farthing" of His people's debt when He made atonement for them on the Cross that "limited" atonement is, indeed, and in truth the only "Complete atonement" that there is.

Let the glorious weight of our next verse anchor this mighty truth in your heart, believer.

"If Thou hast my discharge procured,
And freely in my place endured
The whole of wrath divine,
Payment God will not twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine."

"The wages of sin is death," thunders the Word of God; "The wicked shall be turned into hell," it says. Now, visualise this sight, my friend: here is a sinner in hell, and yet, some would tell us, Christ really paid the debt for his sin! "Aha," says the devil, "what a prize I have here; Christ suffered hell for this sinner, but now this sinner must suffer hell all over again for himself." "Aha," he says again, "Christ paid the price of this one's sin to ransom him from this dark abyss, but Christ hasn't received what He purchased with His blood." "Aha," he cries a third time, "the Father – the Judge of all the earth who is always suppose to do right – laid this sinner's iniquity upon His Son and his Son "bore his grief and carried his sorrow," but now the sinner will have to bear it all over again – I have robbed heaven of its purchase!"
Ah, my friends, if your gospel of redemption leaves such room for such a possibility – that the ransomed and redeemed for whom Jesus shed His blood might indeed be lost at the last, then you have much room for "Fear and unbelief." But banish the thought with this blest truth.

"Payment God will not twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine."

Now may we sing the last verse with Augustus Toplady, and sing of "The merits of our great High Priest" really believing that those merits have purchased all needed grace to reconcile the banished from God back into His favour again. And what Christ has died for can never be lost, but, must be saved, and cannot run the hazard of ever suffering what He once and for all suffered for them:

"Turn, then, my soul, unto thy rest:
The merits of thy Great High Priest
Speak peace and liberty:
Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear thy banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee."

This is the gospel: "Jesus who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Amen.

"There is a Land of Pure Delight"
by Isaac Watts

(1)
There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.

(2)
There everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers;
Death, like a narrow sea, divides
This heavenly land from ours.

(3)
Sweet fields, beyond the swelling flood,
Stand dressed in living green;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
While Jordan rolled between.

(4)
But timorous mortals start, and shrink
To cross the narrow sea;
And linger shivering on the brink.
And fear to launch away.

(5)
Oh, could we make our doubts remove,
Those gloomy doubts that rise,
And see the Canaan that we love
With unbeclouded eyes! —

(6)
Could we but climb where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o'er,
Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood,
Should fright us from the shore.

A popular tune for this hymn is "St. Marguerite"

When a man is the author of over six-hundred hymns, and when those hymns include such as "O God our help in ages past," "When I survey the Wond'rous Cross," "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun," "Come we that love the Lord," "Join all the glorious names," and "I'm not ashamed to own my Lord," then a person might be excused for finding difficulty in deciding which of those hymns he should choose to entitle "great." Such is the case when our minds turn to "The father of English hymn-writing," Isaac Watts, and we have chosen our hymn for this edition, not because it is necessarily the greatest of Watts' hymns, but simply because it represents the depth of our author's faith and hope, and also, because it is a theme that should be much on the believer's heart and mind. The hymn begins: -

"There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign,"

And it is, perhaps, not surprising that we often find "The Seraphic Doctor," as old Isaac Watts was called, dwelling on that place where "everlasting spring abides," for it is there that the saints of God gather around the Throne of the Lamb and sing eternal praises to His Name.

You see, it was this business of the Church's "song" that first set the young Isaac Watts on the career that was soon to make his name a household word. In the days when young Isaac was taken along to the house of God the people of God were accustomed to singing only "The Psalms of David in Metre." This greatly disturbed the young believer, for, he wanted to know, "seeing the Scriptures themselves command us to sing and give thanks in the Name of Christ, why in such singing (as psalm singing) should we be forbidden even to mention that Name?" "Why?" he further asked, "when it is permissible to pray and preach in Christ's Name should we be required to exclude it from our praise?"

The gauntlet that young Isaac had thrown down was taken up by his father, a non-conformist who had suffered imprisonment for conscience sake, and he challenged his young son to provide the church with an example of "Christian" song. At their very next meeting the non-conformist congregation at Southampton were introduced to what is now known as the 65th Paraphrase - "Behold the Glories of the Lamb" – and the singing of hymns, once again, had become part of Christian praise.

Watts wrote on almost every subject that touches the believer's hope and trust in Christ, and he dwelt on "The Glories of the Lamb," not only "amidst His Father's Throne," but on that "wondrous Cross" where he invites us to –

"See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingling down."

He also disclaims any selfish motive in writing these hymns: "I made no pretences," he said, "to the name of a poet or a polite writer … it was not my design to exalt myself to the rank and glory of poets, but I was ambitious to be a servant to the churches and a helper to the joy of the meanest Christian." He well remembered, as he says, "the dull indifference that sat upon the faces of the whole congregation while the psalm was on their lips," and it was for that reason that he "became ambitious to be … a helper to the joy of the meanest Christian."

Needless to say, he went right to the source and spring of that joy, for where does the believer find his chiefest joy but in the Person and Work of his glorious Redeemer Jesus Christ in all that He has purchased for the saint in that "land of pure delight." No wonder Watts was called "The Poet of the Atonement" as well as "The Seraphic Doctor," for the theme of Redemption as well as the theme of Glory sounds to the very depths of almost everything he wrote. And why not? If there is a place of "everlasting spring," and "never-withering flowers," then it is entered by the child of God through the blood of Christ that has reconciled him to his Father in heaven. But, in this particular hymn, it is that entering into the inheritance that Watts is concerned to speak about, for although heaven is "the purchased possession" for the believer in Christ, still withall –

"Death like a narrow sea divides,
That heavenly land from ours."

The simile that Watts uses is a familiar one and is lifted straight out of the history of the earthly people of God in the Old Testament.

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling floods,
Stand dressed in living green;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
While Jordan rolled between."

The Israelites of old had been promised the earthly Canaan, but between them and it there rolled the swelling floods of the river of the Jordan valley. But how much greater a flood do "the floods of death" sometimes present to the trembling saint who, although a saint of God, is still a "timorous mortal" for all that …

"But timorous mortals start and shrink
To cross this narrow sea;
And linger shivering on the brink,
And fear to launch away."

How human our author was - and realistic, too. He had been no stranger, either to suffering or sorrow, and as a small crippled boy he had often stood and gazed upon the prison walls that held his Godly father in the utmost misery.

As a young man, rather than forsake the "faith of his fathers" he refused an offer to study for the Church of England, choosing rather to cast in his lot with the persecuted non-conformists. After a Pastorate of only ten years (in the chapel of the great John Owen) his health completely broke and for the rest of his life he lived, not only a cripple, but an invalid, as well. Indeed, there was little to tie this dear Isaac Watts to this world, but with what honesty does he relate the "earth-clinging" facet of our old nature that would make us "fear to launch away." All he can do is lift his eyes to that very heaven that he longs to enter but fears to approach and pray for such a glimpse of eternity that the gloom of the passage across the river will be dispelled.

"O! could we make our doubts remove,
Those gloomy doubts that rise,
And see the Canaan that we love,
With unbeclouded eyes."

How dependent we are upon the Lord of grace! Not only must he give us salvation, and the inheritance of salvation in heaven, but He must also set us upon that summit of hope where we can see that inheritance and gain strength to lay hold upon it.

"Could we but climb where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o'er,
Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood,
Should fright us from the shore."

Indeed, indeed, it is "all of grace." Not only must we be "brought out of Egypt by a mighty hand," but we must be led into Canaan by the one and the same omnipotence. "And whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son … … … Moreover, whom he did predestinate them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified." From Egypt to Canaan it is "the Lord's doings, and wondrous in our eyes." Through grace, the condemned sinner is set for that "land of pure delight where saints immortal reign." This is salvation, and this is the gospel.

Amen.

"A Safe Stronghold our God is Still" by Martin Luther

(1)
A safe stronghold our God is still,
A trusty shield and weapon:
He'll help us clear from all the ill
That hath us now o'ertaken.
The ancient prince of hell
Hath risen with purpose fell;
Strong mail of craft and power
He weareth in this hour;
On earth is not his fellow.

(2)
With force of arms we nothing can,
Full soon were we down-ridden;
But for us fights the proper Man,
Whom God himself hath bidden.
Ask ye who is this same?
Christ Jesus is his Name,
The Lord Sabaoth's Son,
He, and no other one,
Shall conquer in the battle.

(3)
And were this world all devils o'er
And watching to devour us,
We lay it not to heart so sore;
Not they can overpower us,
And let the prince of ill
Look grim as e'er he will,
He harms us not a whit,
For why? — his doom is writ;
A word shall quickly slay him.

(4)
God's word, for all their craft and force,
One moment will not linger,
But, spite of hell, shall have its course;
'Tis written by his finger.
And, though they take our life,
Goods, honour, children, wife,
Yet is their profit small;
These things shall vanish all;
The city of God remaineth.

A popular tune for this hymn is "Ein Feste Burg"

We are not very inclined to think of Martin Luther as a hymn-writer, and yet, the great Reformer was both able and prolific in this gift, and some 37 hymns have been attributed to him including the children's hymn, "Away in a manger." That the fiery hammer of the papacy should have written such a carol must surely teach us that many of those mighty men of the Reformation were men of warm and tender hearts, and that it was, in fact, their greatness of heart that could never permit them to allow God's unchanging truth to be maligned or its message trampled upon. Luther is every bit as much at home in instructing the young that the Lord had given to his charge as he is combating the heresies and abuses of his day. For, to him, both are essential features of the gospel of God's free unchanging grace to sinners. Not only would he "teach all nations," but he would "earnestly contend for the faith," as well.

In this hymn, we see Martin Luther clad in the armour of God's everlasting gospel and striving valiantly against that old enemy of men's souls – the devil.

"A Safe stronghold our God is still,
A trusty shield and weapon;
He'll keep us clear from all the ill
That hath us now o'ertaken.
The ancient prince of hell
Hath risen with his purpose fell*; *(cruel)
Strong mail of craft and power
He weareth in this hour;
On earth is not his fellow."

Perhaps no one more than Martin Luther recognised the power and greatness of the Evil one in the conflict for men's souls. He is "the ancient prince of hell," he says, and on the whole of this earth, among the created beings of God there is not another creature like this "prince of darkness." Luther was in no doubt as to the "weapons" that this "angel of light" and this "roaring lion" (for he is both in one) could employ and was employing at that particular time in the history of Christ's Church. It was "Strong mail of craft and power." "However," we can hear the great Reformer proclaim, "In all these things we are more than conquerors." And we are "more than conquerors" on account of the impregnable fortress in which the Lord has placed our souls."

"A safe stronghold our God is still,
A trusty shield and weapon."

This is the only hope of the child of God saved by grace, and it is no wonder that Luther's hymn became "The Battle-song of the Reformation." "The Reformers' Marseillaise," it has been called by one, and "God Almighty's Grenadier March" by another. And no wonder, we say again, for here was the very warp and woof of that great religious revolution and what it stood for and what it meant. There was a God in heaven and on the earth – a Sovereign God who justified the ungodly and then held them in the hollow of His hand to the fulfilment of His perfect will and purpose. "Why don't you build more fortresses?" the Elector Frederick was asked; "A mighty fortress is our God," was his reply. And once let a man be assured of that, and, not only will men fail to affright him, but the very prince of hell himself will make heavy weather of it in trying to turn him away from the work that he believes this God has put into his hand. "Come," Luther would often say to his friends,

"let us defy the devil and sing a hymn." And whether or not we would fully agree with the church of Rome's assessment that "Luther has done us more harm with his hymns than with his sermons," still withal, we can appreciate what drove them to such a remark. Once let the people of God begin to sing out of full hearts to the God of their salvation, and the powers of hell shall scatter before them, for the song of praise is a thing unknown in the regions of the lost.

Trust in God! That's what Luther is proclaiming in this first verse of his hymn, and in the second, he couples this trust in God with distrust in ourselves.

"With force of arms we nothing can,
Full soon were we down-ridden;
But for us fights the proper Man,
Whom God Himself hath bidden.
Ask ye: Who is this same?
Christ Jesus is His Name,
The Lord Sabaoth's Son;
He, and no other one,
Shall conquer in the battle."

And in the next verse, it's the absolute all-sufficiency of that overcoming power of our great Redeemer that is the burden of our author's heart.

"And were this world all devils o'er,
And watching to devour us,
We lay it not to heart so sore;
Not they can overpower us.
And let the prince of ill
Look grim as e'er he will,
He harms us not a whit;
For why? His doom is writ;
A word shall quickly slay him."

It has been said that the first line of this verse is a paraphrase of Luther's triumphant utterance as he and his fellow-reformers entered into the town of Worms, out of which it was feared, they would never return alive. "Though there were as many devils at Worms as tiles on the roof," said Luther, "nevertheless I will go." And into that town they went, we are told, singing this song until "the old Cathedral trembled at these new notes, and the Ravens

were startled in their nests in the towers." And why did they venture forth "none daring to make them afraid?" Luther tells us in the last two lines of this verse. Let the devil look upon them "as grim as e'er he will;" "His doom is writ," says Luther, and the Word of God "shall quickly slay him."

God's Word – that's the concern of the final verse; and, Luther is reminding us in the words of the apostle Paul, "The word of God is not bound," – not even by the devil and his host.

"God's word – for all their craft and force –
One moment will not linger:
But, in spite of hell, shall have its course,
'Tis written by His finger.
And though they take our life,
Goods, honour, children, wife,
Yet is their profit small:
These things shall vanish all;
The city of God remaineth."

"God's everlasting Word will stand forever," Luther is saying; "let me live by that and labour for that. And though men may rob me of my 'goods' and my 'honour' and my very children and wife, still withall, my eternal lot remains secure in my 'Safe Stronghold' – 'The city of God remaineth.'"

Amen.

"Forever With the Lord!"
by James Montgomery

(1)
For ever with the Lord!
Amen! So let it be!
Life from the dead is in that word,
'Tis immortality!
Here in the body pent,
Absent from Him I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A days march nearer home.

(2)
My Father's house on high,
Home of my soul how near,
At times to faith's foreseeing eye,
Thy golden gates appear.
Here in the body pent, etc.

(3)
Ah, then my spirit faints
To reach the land I love,
The bright inheritance of saints,
Jerusalem above!
Here in the body pent, etc.

(4)
For ever with the Lord!
Father, if Tis thy will,
The promise of that faithful word
E'en here to me fulfil.
Here in the body pent,
Absent from Him I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A days march nearer home.

(5)
So when my latest breath
Shall rend the veil in twain,
By death I shall escape from death,
And life eternal gain.
Here in the body pent, etc.

(6)
Knowing as I am known,
How shall I love that word;
And oft repeat before the throne,
"For ever with the Lord!".
Here in the body pent, etc.

A popular tune for this hymn is "Nearer Home"

James Montgomery is one of the Church's most prolific hymn-writers. Some four-hundred-and-fifty hymns are attributed to his pen, and when we consider that there are still about a hundred of these in current use in our hymn-books, we can see how our hymnody would be that much impoverished without his contribution.

Montgomery was born at Irvine, in Ayrshire, where his father was a Moravian minister and an Ulster Scot. His birth took place in 1771, and five years later his parents moved to the Moravian settlement in county Antrim, Northern Ireland. With regards to the timing of this move, Montgomery used to remark (with a glint in his eye) that he "narrowly escaped being an Irishman!") From Antrim, his parents moved to the West Indies, where they both died, having

already left their young son in the care of the Moravian settlement at Fulneck, in Yorkshire.

After the death of his parents, young James Montgomery's life seems to have run into all kinds of difficulties and upsets. He began writing poetry and this found little acceptance with the over-seers of the Fulneck community. The same over-seers became greatly dissatisfied with his progress as a student, and he was apprenticed to a local baker. He soon absconded from this position, ran away to Wakefield to work in a store, ran away from this as well, to Rotherham, and finally ended up in London at the start of his eighteenth year. After a year in London, where he tried to find a publisher for his poems, he eventually came to Sheffield where the providence of God at last settled him in the post of editor of a Sheffield newspaper for the next thirty-one years of his life.

As editor of the "Iris," as the newspaper was called, Montgomery sought to exercise both a social and an evangelical concern. The former wasn't always acceptable to the powers that be, and on two occasions he found himself impounded in York Castle for his "non-establishment" sentiments. He refused to run advertisements for the State lotteries then in vogue, referring to them as "a national nuisance." Evangelically, Montgomery took a firm position in his newspaper editorship, he was a devoted participant in a great deal of missionary endeavour, a strong advocate against the slave trade, and a keen supporter of Bible translation work for the missions abroad, and, of course in the columns of the Iris much of his poetic work found an outlet. His poetic output was considerable and was widely accepted and acclaimed; but when asked which of his works he thought would endure, he said, "nothing; except, perhaps, a few of my hymns." So it proved to be, for few today would think of James Montgomery as one of the nation's great poets. But so he would have had it to be; "I would rather be the anonymous author of a few hymns which should thus become the imperishable inheritance of the people of God," he wrote, "than bequeath another epic poem to the world which should rank my name with Homer, Virgil, or our greater Milton."

Now, Montgomery has bequeathed to the Church a lot more than a "few hymns." "Go to dark Gethsemane, ye who feel the tempter's power." "Hail to the Lord's Anointed, great David's greater Son," "Sow in the morn thy seed," "Lord, teach us how to pray aright," "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire," "Be known to us in breaking bread," According to Thy gracious Word, in meek humility," "Angels from the realms of glory," "Shepherd of souls, Thou Saviour dear," "Command Thy blessing from above," "Stand up and bless

the Lord," "O Spirit of the Living God," "Songs of praise the angels sang," - and, of course, "For ever with the Lord, Amen, so let it be!"

Montgomery's "great" hymn may be said to be, "Hail to the Lord's Anointed." It is his rich rendering of the 72nd Psalm and was reproduced in Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Whole Bible at the end of his exposition of Psalm 72. "I need not tell the intelligent reader," Dr Clarke writes, "that he (Montgomery) has seized the spirit, and exhibited some of the principal beauties, of the Hebrew bard; though - to use his own words in a letter to me - his 'hand trembled to touch the harp of Zion.' I take the liberty here to register a wish," the commentator goes on, "that he would favour the church of God with a metrical version of the whole Book of Psalms." A whole Psalter from the pen of James Montgomery! It's a tempting thought. However, it was not to be, and we rest with Watts, and Newton, and some others - not forgetting the good men who transcribed the sweet singer of Israel into rhyme for our own Scottish Metrical Version.

The overall sentiment of "For ever with the Lord", is expressed in the original heading to the hymn:- "At Home in Heaven - 1st Thessalonians 4 verse 17." As many will know, the concluding words of 1st Thessalonians 4 verse 17 reads, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." it is that thought and that blessed hope that the author of the hymn will have us sing about in our worship of God under his composition.

The apostle Paul has been dealing with the whole question of the "immortality" of the Lord's people - both those who have died and gone ahead and those who shall remain and be still alive at the coming of the Lord. Whichever grouping we might belong to, however, the apostle is saying, one thing is sure, our eventual destination is our home in heaven at last. It is this thought that our hymn-writer has lighted-on. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren," says the apostle Paul, "concerning them that are asleep ..." And then he tells about them which are asleep in Christ Jesus - them will God bring with Him when he comes again. He tells us about them that are still alive at the coming of the Lord - they will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. And he tells us about the whole climax of the affair - "And so shall we ever be with the Lord."

"For ever with the Lord!
Amen, so let it be!
Life from the dead is in that word,
'Tis immortality.

Here in the body pent,
Absent from Him I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A day's march nearer home."

It is one of those "Pilgrim songs" of the Church of Christ, but it is a Pilgrim "Marching song." The author has taken due note of the fact that we are "pent" up in this mortal body, and, in the next verse, he allows for that "fainting" of our spirit to reach the land we love; but, nevertheless, it is a constant march forward, and the arrival at the destination is never in doubt.

Perhaps the very tune to which Montgomery's hymn is set aids us in that "march." "Nearer Home" is the title, although it is sometimes referred to simply as, Montgomery." It was written by Isaac Woodbury, who gives this preface to the volume of tunes in which it appears: - "The music is not designed for the fastidious and scientific musician whose highest delight, and perhaps whose sole worship, is music as an art, but for those who love to worship God in the simple song of praise." And so, we may sing of our "tent," indeed; of it being pitched "a day's march nearer home," with every day that closes; but that "home" is "our Father's house on high," and when we come to that house, we will no longer have such "tents" as these in which we now tabernacle and pilgrimage.

The third verse of the hymn again rings with that "battle-march" kind of sentiment.

"For ever with the Lord!
Father, if 'tis Thy will,
The promise of that faithful word,
E'en here to me fulfil.
Be Thou at my right hand,
then I can never fail;
Uphold - thou me, and I shall stand;
Fight, and I must prevail."

And there is a hint of John Owen's "Death of death in the death of Christ" in the last verse.

"So when my latest breath
Shall rend the veil in twain,
By death, I shall escape from death,

And life eternal gain.
That resurrection-word,
That shout of victory:
Once more, 'For ever with the Lord!'
Amen, so let it be!"

Montgomery's hymn sets before us, not only "Holy Dying," but "Holy Living," as well. He exhorts us to fix our eye on that "Father's house" above, but he exhorts us to march through this world with our eye fixed on that "blessed centre rest." We are bound for heaven, but this hymn is meant to help us to go there having our loins girt, and our staff in our hand. May God enable us to do so.

Amen.

"Glory to Thee, my God this night"

by Thomas Ken

(1) Glory to Thee, my God, this night, For all the blessings of the light; Keep me, O keep me, King of kings, Under Thine own almighty wings!	(4) Oh, may my soul on Thee repose, And with sweet sleep mine eyelids close — Sleep that shall me more vigorous make, To serve my God when I awake!
(2) Forgive me, Lord, for Thy dear Son, The ills that I this day have done; That, with the world, myself and Thee, I, ere I sleep, at peace may be.	(5) If in the night I sleepless lie, My soul with heavenly thoughts supply; Let no ill dreams disturb my rest, No powers of darkness me molest.
(3) Teach me to live, that I may dread The grave as little as my bed: Teach me to die, that so I may Triumphing rise at the last day.	(6) Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise Him, all creatures here below, Praise Him above, ye heavenly host, Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

A popular tune for this hymn is "Allis Canon"

There must be very few hymns that are more readily recognised by their "closing" verse than by their opening verse, but this "Evening Hymn" of Bishop Thomas Ken would probably fall into that unique category. "Glory to Thee, my God, this night," or "All praise to Thee, my God, this night," (as it reads in some hymn books) might not immediately register in some people's minds, but who hasn't sung, at one time or another, Ken's famous concluding stanzas:-

"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him, all creatures here below,
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

These lines have been well-named, "The Protestant Doxology," and it has been reckoned that they have been "more frequently heard in England and America than any other verses of sacred song."

James Montgomery, himself no mean hymn-writer, pronounced this doxology

to be "a masterpiece of amplification and compression," while the anecdotes and incidents that surround it are many and varied. Old William Grimshaw of Haworth used to sing it first thing every morning without fail, and at one time of refreshing from the hand of the Lord at Sheffield, it was sung no less than thirty-five times before the people finally dispersed from a meeting there. John Wesley relates one death-bed scene involving Ken's doxology that probably had been, and has been, repeated on other occasions with slight variations. It concerns the dying widow of one of Wesley's preachers. As she was about to pass on to be with the Lord, she said, "Call my son to see me die." Her son came to her side, and there asked her, "Have you any fear of death?" "Oh no!" she said, "that is gone long since; perfect love casts out fear." Then she added, "Do you see Him? There He is waiting to receive my soul." Then, says Wesley, "she then sang with a clear voice, 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow,' and end her life and her song together."

Thomas Ken was born at Birkhamstead, the birthplace of William Cowper, in the year 1637, and died in 1711. He is, therefore, one of those people whose ministry spanned the reigns of four British Monarchs: Charles II, James II, William III, and Queen Anne. His Churchmanship was of the "high" order; he offended James II by opposing his popery, yet refused to swear an oath of allegiance to William III. Ken's hymn, however, is all focussed on the daily living and dying of the children of God, and in this, it excels.

"Glory to Thee, my God, this night,
For all the blessings of the light;
Keep me, O keep me, King of kings,
Under Thine own almighty wings."

All "glory" is ascribed to God, all "blessings" are received from God, all "safety" is found in God. That's the kind of thing that Ken is telling us in the opening verse of his hymn. And when he comes to the second verse, he is continuing that kind of theme - of our utter dependence upon the Lord God Almighty to be the people that He has called us to be. All our "forgiveness" comes from God, and all our "peace" is had from God;

"Forgive me, Lord, for Thy dear Son,
The ills that I this day have done;
That, with the world, myself, and Thee,
I, ere I sleep, at peace may be."

The verses that form this hymn in most hymn books are taken from a larger

work entitled, "Morning and Evening Hymns." The popular portion from the "Morning" section of the work is, "Awake, my soul, and with the sun, thy daily stage of duty run;" while, "Glory to Thee, my God this night," gathers together some of the most outstanding parts of the "Evening" section. Ken wrote his "Morning and Evening Hymns" while he was at Winchester, and for "the use of the Scholars of Winchester College." It was while he was in Winchester that there occurred one of those many incidents of Ken's life that showed him to be the very embodiment of the things he sought for in the course of his hymn. He ever laboured to have a conscience void of offence before his God and within his own soul. Remember -

"That with the world, myself, and Thee,
I, ere I sleep, at peace may be."

And to keep this good conscience, Ken feared not the face of man, even when that face belonged to the man who was King of England. So it happened that when Charles II came to visit Winchester on one occasion, he brought with him his infamous mistress, Nell Gwynne, and proposed that she should be lodged in Ken's home. Ken was adamant; "not for the king's kingdom" would he permit such a thing. Charles was greatly annoyed, yet, when no man of any real stature could be found to become the Bishop of Bath, the King remembered the "insult" of that day at Winchester; "Where is the little man who wouldn't give poor Nelly a lodging?" he asked; "give it to him." Charles II knew all about Thomas Ken and his preaching; "I must go and hear little Ken tell me my faults," he said, as he made his way towards the Royal Chapel one day. Ken knew his own heart, and the hearts of others, as well.

One of the most outstanding verses in the hymn, apart from the "Doxology", in most books:

"Teach me to live, that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed:
Teach me to die, that so I may
Triumphing rise at the last day."

This, too, was absolutely embodied and exemplified in the life of Thomas Ken. He did, indeed, have as little "dread" of the grave as he had for the place where he lay down to sleep each night. For years, he carried his shroud about with him, and when he was finally told by his doctor that he had only a few hours to live, he calmly dressed himself in that shroud to await the departure of his soul to the Lord and the committal of his body to the ground until that resurrection

morning. Ken dwelt much on the fact of resurrection. When he had to retire, he gathered about him only a few of his most prized and precious possessions; among these was his Greek New Testament, which, we are told, "used to open of its own accord at the 15th chapter of First Corinthians" - Paul's great resurrection chapter.

So, Bishop Ken's hymn reflects "outward" - in the life that the man lived, and it reflects "upward" - to the life that he desired to live more and more. He knew that for this life he was completely dependent on God, even with regards to his "resting" hours as well as his waking moments. Like the psalmist before him, he exhorts us to sing -

"I will both lay me down in peace,
And quiet sleep will take."

So: -

"Oh, may my soul on Thee repose,
And with sweet sleep mine eyelids close
Sleep that shall me more vigorous make
To serve my God when I awake:

If in the night I sleepless lie,
My soul with heavenly thoughts supply;
Let no ill dreams disturb my rest,
No powers of darkness me molest."

Then comes his great, and grand, and glorious doxology: -

"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him, all creatures here below,
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost."

If Thomas Ken had written nothing else than that doxology he would, surely, have fulfilled the aspiration which he expressed in rhyme at the introduction of his Morning and Evening Hymns: -

"And should the well-meant songs I leave behind
With Jesus' lovers an acceptance find,
'Twill heighten e'en the joys of heaven to know
That in my verse the saints hymn God below."

When Thomas Whytehead, an aspiring missionary to New Zealand in 1842, died after only a few months in that land, he held that his short-lived missionary endeavours had not been in vain, because he had managed to translate into the Maori tongue Bishop Ken's evening hymn. "... it is a comfort to think," he told a few friends just before he died, "that one has introduced Bishop Ken's beautiful hymn into the Maori's evening worship, and left them this legacy when I could do no more for them."

"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow."

Amen

"Jesus, Lover of My Soul"

by Charles Wesley

(1)
Jesus! Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high:
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life is past,
Safe into the haven guide.
Oh, receive my soul at last!

(2)
Other refuge have I none —
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee!
Leave, ah, leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me!
All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing.

(3)
Thou, O Christ, art all I want!
More than all in Thee I find;
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick, and lead the blind.
Just and Holy is Thy name,
I am all unrighteousness;
Vile and full of sin I am,
Thou art full of truth and grace.

(4)
Plenteous grace with Thee is found —
Grace to pardon all my sin;
Let the healing streams abound,
Make and keep me pure within
Thou of life the Fountain art,
Freely let me take of Thee;
Spring Thou up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity.

A popular tune for this hymn is "Hollingside"

John Wesley said with regards to the thousands of hymns that his brother Charles wrote; there are "some bad, some mean, some most excellently good." As far as, "Jesus, Lover of my Soul," is concerned excellence probably falls short of an adequate term of praise for it.

Both Charles and John Wesley were among the men whom God was pleased to use so effectively in the 18th-century awakening. Although the theology of the two men took a different turn from that of Whitefield, a great many of the hymns that came from their pens bear vital testimony to the fact that their hope and trust rested only in the hands of an Omnipotent and Mighty God. Sometimes, in the things of a man's salvation, a man's heart is "better" than his head; we would deem this less offensive than a man's head appearing "better" than his heart. When Charles Simeon took up and read Charles Wesley's "And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood," he was heard to mutter, "Where's your Arminianism now, brother!" The same

might be said about many of Wesley's hymns - "Jesus, Lover of my soul," included.

The Wesleys' interest in, and devotion to hymn-writing stemmed from a deep dissatisfaction with much that went under the name of Church praise in their day. It was this that had also moved Isaac Watts, not long before, to begin his translation of the Book of Psalms. The current psalm books in use, John Wesley described as "scandalous doggerel," and spoke of the sense of the psalms being torn "limb from limb." Determined to investigate further into the matter, the two brothers set sail for America armed with Watts' Hymns, and one or two other pieces. On board ship, however, they found the real moving force for their writings that were soon to follow. A party of Moravian emigrants were also travelling to the New World, and their stirring and inspiring hymn-singing caught the hearts and minds of the Wesley brothers. John began there and then his work of translating the German hymns, and Charles was fired to begin a course of writing that was to influence the Church's praise from that day forward. To choose out one hymn in particular must, of necessity, leave out a multitude of equal merit and worth. Yet, "Jesus, Lover of my Soul," will probably rank the most noble of them all in many people's minds. How often we have found ourselves lapsing into, or bursting into - depending on our spiritual frames and feelings - "Jesus, Lover of my Soul?" When fit to fight the devil, it can be a battle-hymn, indeed, for us; when needing all the comfort that a Covenant-keeping God can bestow upon a feeble saint, it can draw down the peace of heaven upon our souls. In the quietness of our own heart- at the steering -wheel of our car -Mr Wesley's lovely words can suddenly come, doing their special work to our souls. We can fully appreciate the sentiments of Dr Duffield, (himself the author of a grand militant hymn - "Stand up, stand up for Jesus" - yet one who wilted for a time in the fight and was restored again through Wesley's hymn) "One of the most blessed days of my life," he says, "was when I found, after my harp had hung on the willows, that I could sing again; that a new song was put into my mouth; and when, before I was ever aware, I was singing 'Jesus, Lover of my soul.'" Such testimonials are legion, and a summary of them all might be found in the statement - "The finest heart hymn in the English language."

The supposed origin of "Jesus, Lover of my soul" (that it was inspired by a small bird flying into Wesley's open cloak to escape a hawk) makes pleasant reading, but has really no basis in fact. It is one of these cases where the hymn has produced the supposed incident, and not the incident the hymn. What really produced the hymn was Wesley's own flight to the "bosom" of the Risen Lord, to escape the "nearer waters" and the "tempest" and the

"storm of life" that would surely have left him shipwrecked in hell for ever. It is a hymn of testimony from the pen of the converted sinner in acknowledgement of the "plenteous grace" that was found to do that converting work.

It is headed, "In time of Prayer and Temptation," and Charles Wesley knew that the same "haven" and "refuge" that had received his soul at the first would go on receiving his soul, right up until it had received his soul at last."

"Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high."

As surely as the children of Israel had realised that it was their Covenant God who had piled-up the waters of the Red Sea on either side of them and brought them safe to Canaan; as sure as the apostle Paul realised that God had kept him, "in perils of the deep;" as sure as the Psalmist David could sing, "he bringeth them into their desired haven" - so Charles Wesley could express the experience of his own heart, and other hearts, as well. The vivid contrast between the sinner and the Saviour who died to redeem that sinner is too clear for words: Wesley has a "helpless soul," a "defenceless head;" he is "fallen" and "faint," "sick" and "blind"; he is "false" and "all unrighteousness." By contrast, Christ is the One who is "Just and Holy;" He is the One who is "full of truth and grace;" He is the One who is the Fountain of Life -

"Thou of life the Fountain art."

Wherever you look in Wesley's great hymn, you find a great love for a great Saviour. The strength of the "monosyllables" has often been pointed out: - "Thou" - "want" - "take" - "find" - "more" - "found" "rise" - "heal" - etc., etc. It has been computed that out of the forty-six words in verse 1, thirty-six are monosyllables; out of the forty-six in verse 2, thirty-seven are monosyllables; out of the fifty-one in verse 3, forty-eight, and out of the forty-five in verse 4, thirty-six. No doubt but that explains much of the ease and much of the feeling with which the average congregation or the average believer can render this grand hymn. But, above all things, it is, surely, the subject-matter of the hymn that gives it its abiding place in the praise of the Church. It is simply the story of the sinner and His Saviour. That theme will still constitute the songs of heaven itself - "Unto Him who loved us and loosed us from our

sins in his own blood" - small wonder if it finds a vital place in the song of the Church here below.

"Other Refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

A believer will never outgrow that truth and still be credited a believer in our Lord Jesus Christ. When the old dying saint left instructions that his tombstone should be inscribed - "Thou, O Christ, art all I want," he probably said it all.

Amen

"What Various Hindrances we Meet"

by William Cowper

(1)
What various hindrances we meet
In coming to the mercy-seat!
Yet who that knows the worth of prayer,
But wishes to be often there?

(2)
Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw,
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;
gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings every blessing from above.

(3)
Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the Christian's armour bright:
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.

(4)
While Moses stood with arms spread wide,
Success was found on Israel's side;
But when through weariness they failed,
That moment Amalek prevailed.

(5)
Have you no words? Ah! Think again,
Words flow apace when you complain,
And fill your fellow-creature's ear
With the sad tale of all your care.

(6)
Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would oftener be,
"Hear what the Lord has done for me!"

A popular tune for this hymn is "Antwerp"

Prayer was a subject that was close to the heart of William Cowper, as it was to the heart of his dear friend, John Newton, when both men resided in the town of Olney, in the county of Buckinghamshire. John Newton was ordained to the Christian ministry and appointed to the charge of the Parish Church of Olney in the year 1764. Three years later William Cowper arrived in the same village and there began a remarkable friendship and association that was to stretch over many years and see the production of the first copy of "The Olney Hymns" in 1769. Of the three-hundred-and-forty-eight hymns that comprise the original book, two-hundred-and-eighty- are by John Newton, and the remaining sixty-eight by Cowper. Even the most casual glance at the index of the Olney Hymns more than bespeaks its great contribution to the story of the Church's song.

The Hymns written by Cowper are preceded by the letter "C", and include such masterpieces as "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform," "The Spirit breathes upon the Word," "There is a Fountain filled with blood," "O for a closer walk with God," "Hark, my soul, it is the Lord, "

and many, many more. From Newton's pen come, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound," "Begone unbelief," "Glorious things of thee are spoken," "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds," and, again, more than our present space could possibly permit. The subject of prayer is well-covered, and this is not surprising on account of the situation that first produced the Olney Hymns of Newton and Cowper.

When John Newton first came to Olney in 1764, he greatly felt the burden of promoting the Church's praise to the Lord his God. As the "Old African blasphemer," Newton had shown no little ability in composing manys a raucous and ribald song for the enjoyment of his ship-mates. In the providence of God, however, that ability was to be turned in a very different direction, and Newton began to write a number of hymns at Olney for the good of his congregation for the glory of God among them.

One of the meetings of the Church that Newton especially had in mind in the composition of many of his hymns was the Tuesday evening meeting for prayer and fellowship. When Cowper arrived on the scene, he also put his hand to this work, and the combined labours of the two men bore much fruit. It was the practice of the people to meet for prayer, and then, at some point in the evening, either Newton or Cowper would produce a new hymn which was taught to the people in the normal way of those days - by rote - before the meeting would conclude with the singing of it. Thus, not a few of the hymns were devoted to the subject of prayer itself, by way of encouragement in prayer, or exhortation to prayer, or, indeed as in the case of the present hymn, a stripping away of some of our man-made excuses that keep us from prayer.

Two of Christianity's most renowned hymns on prayer come as a direct result of the Olney Prayer meeting and in connection with an increase in numbers at that meeting which necessitated the removal into larger premises. In April 1769, Newton made mention of this in a letter to a friend:

"We are going to remove our prayer meeting to the great room in the Great House." (An uninhabited house in Olney, belonging to Lord Dartmouth.) "It is a noble place, with a parlour behind it, and holds one hundred and thirty people conveniently. Pray for us, that the Lord may be in the midst of us there, and that as He has now given us a Rehoboth (there is room) so He may be pleased to add to our numbers and make us fruitful in the land."

In connection with this removal, both men wrote new hymns, and William Cowper's contribution - the majestic "Jesus Where'er Thy People Meet" - has

an immediate reference to the new enlarged sphere of worship, with "the parlour behind it."

Behold, at Thy commanding word,
We stretch the curtain and the cord:
Come Thou and fill this wider space,
And bless us with a large increase."

The actual enlargement of the place of the prayer meeting of itself, of course, didn't guarantee any sure success, and we can sense the breathing of William Cowper's spirit as he writes:

"Dear Shepherd of Thy chosen few,
Thy former mercies here renew;
Here to our waiting hearts proclaim
The sweetness of Thy saving name."

That same spirit pervades Newton's composition for the occasion, as well:

"Great Shepherd of Thy people, hear;
Thy presence now display
As Thou hast given a place for prayer,
So give us hearts to pray."

And again: -

"Within these walls let holy peace,
And love and concord dwell;
Here give the troubled conscience peace
The wounded spirit heal.

So, the subject of prayer very much bound together the heart of the old converted "sea dog" and the heart of the "gentle recluse," as Cowper has been called. It would scarce be possible to find two men more different in character, and yet enjoying more loving and useful fellowship in the things of their God. So many periods of Cowper's life, as readily acknowledged, were terribly clouded and shrouded by the mental distress that came over him from time to time. But it is the general consensus of opinion that among his most happy and fruitful years were those spent next door to Newton's Vicarage in the home of the Unwins. It was Cowper's habit to "step through the hedge" that divided the backs of the two houses, and slip up the back staircase to Newton's study "where prayer was wont to be made." William Bull, the

Independent Minister at near-by Newport Pagnell, voiced the opinion of many when he said that he "never heard praying that equalled Mr Cowper's." In many things, the two men - Newton and Cowper - stood united, and none more so than in the business of prayer of which they often wrote, often spoke and often engaged in; and so, "What Various Hindrances we Meet."

The very basis of Cowper's great hymn is the acknowledgement of the difficulty that human nature encounters in the business of praying, and yet, the absolute and total necessity of engaging in that exercise.

"What various hindrances we meet
In coming to the mercy-seat!
Yet who that knows the worth of prayer,
But wishes to be often there?"

It is one of those cases - "The good that I would I do not." And it is always that constant battle of being able to offset in our hearts and minds all those "various hindrances" to prayer with "the worth" that is found in that means of grace. Like his dear friend Newton, William Cowper continually laces his hymns with scriptural concepts and scriptural incidents: -

"Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw,
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;
Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings every blessing from above."

Prayer is indeed, a Bethel - a house of God - to the Lord's people so often. And as dear old Jacob heard the Covenant blessing renewed to him from the top of that ladder that night in that place, how often we can get a glimpse of Him "who keepeth covenant with his people" and conveys those promised blessings to us, time and time again.

The "opposite" situation is also unhappily envisaged, and in the next two verses, Cowper sets the issues of spiritual warfare - both in defeat and in victory - before us:

"Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the Christian's armour bright:
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.

While Moses stood with arms spread wide,
Success was found on Israel's side;
But when through weariness they failed,
That moment Amalek prevailed."

That scriptural picture given to us there of that famous battle at Rephidem might well strip away from us any reason for not praying. But it is in the final two verses of the hymn that Cowper really leaves us without excuse, indeed, for ceasing that work.

"Have you no words? ah! think again,
Words flow apace when you complain,
And fill your fellow-creature's ear
With the sad tale of all your care."

No words! Nothing to ask! Nothing to say! Then why is "your fellow-creature's ear" so bent! Surely there were a few red faces in Olney the night the people were confronted with that verse.

And so the conclusion:

"Were half the breath thus vainly spent" - in filling our fellow-creatures ears -

"Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would oftener be,
Hear what the Lord hath done for me."

So be it.

Amen

Appendices

(1)

"The Sands of Time are Sinking"

A Hymn by Mrs Ann Cousins

(2)

The Full Poem

Based on the Letters of Samuel Rutherford

By Mrs Ann Cousins

Appendix (1)
"The Sands of Time are Sinking"

by Ann Ross Cousins

(1)
The Sands of time are sinking
The dawn of heaven breaks,
The summer morn I've sighed for,
The fair, sweet morn, awakes:
Dark, dark hath been the midnight,
But dayspring is at hand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

(2)
The king there in His beauty,
Without a veil is seen;
It were a well-spent journey,
Though seven deaths lay between;
The Lamb with His fair army
Doth on Mount Zion stand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

(3)
O Christ, He is the fountain,
The deep sweet well of love!
The streams on earth I've tasted,
More deep I'll drink above;
There, to an ocean fulness,
His mercy doth expand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's Land.

(4)
With mercy and with judgment
My web of time He wove,
And aye the dews of sorrow
Were lustred with His love:
I'll bless the hand that guided,
I'll bless the heart that planned,
When throned where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

(5)
Oh, I am my Beloved's,
And my Beloved's mine;
He brings a poor vile sinner
Into His house of wine!
I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

(6)
The Bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear Bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory,
But on my King of grace:
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand:
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land.

A popular tune for this hymn is "Rutherford"

The five or six verses that are normally sung under the above title are taken from a nineteen verse poem composed by Mrs Anne Cousins, the wife of a Free Church of Scotland minister, in the middle of the 19th century. Mrs Cousins is also the author of, "O Christ, what burdens bowed Thy head," and one or two other hymns in general use, but it is undoubtedly, her "Sands of time" that is her best known and best-loved composition.

The scheme of the hymn revolves around the death-bed sayings of Samuel Rutherford, the 17th century Scottish Presbyterian Minister, who sat on the Westminster Committee of Divines and was the author of numerous outstanding letters addressed to many people on many subjects. When Rutherford lay at the point of death in St. Andrews, in 1661, he prophetically told his friends that, "This night will close the door, and fasten my anchor within the veil, and I shall go away in a sleep by five o'clock in the morning." After a few more words to the same effect, he then spoke his final phrase: "Glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land." With that sentiment as her basis, Mrs Cousins then gathered together a choice selection of Rutherford's other words from his letters and wove them into a choice mosaic of spiritual truth that has, surely stood the test of many years.

"The sands of time are sinking,
The dawn of heaven breaks,
The summer morn I've sighed for,
The fair sweet morn, awakes:
Dark, dark hath been the midnight,
But dayspring is at hand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

When Mrs Cousins penned those opening lines of her hymn, she showed her total acquaintance with Samuel Rutherford's letters and one of the great themes and burdens of Samuel Rutherford's letters. If we read the letters, or the sermons, of Rutherford one thought that we cannot get away from is the thought that we have been set on this earth to make sure work of the work of salvation within our souls, and to realise the "end" of that salvation, which will be our acceptance into glory at last to see, "The King there in His beauty." In the light of that, then, Rutherford is always exhorting, "while it is yet day" - before "the sands of time" have all slipped away - "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

"My worthy and dear brother," wrote Rutherford in one of his letters to John Gordon of Rusco, "Misspend not your short sandglass which runneth very fast; seek your Lord in time." And to whoever he wrote - young, old, rich, poor, nobility, commoner - you can sense the silent sifting of that sand of time through that small, small hole that regulates the flow to its allotted space. To Lady Kenmure; "... my dear and honourable Lady, spend your sand-glass well." and on another occasion, "There is less sand in your glass now, than there was yesternight ... Persuade yourself the King is coming; read his letter

sent before Him, 'Behold, I come quickly.'" To a woman known only by the name of Margaret Ballantine; "Mistress ... it is more than time that I should have written to you; but it is yet a good time, if I could help your soul to mend your pace ... For truly ye have need to make all haste, because the inch of your day that remaineth will quickly slip away; for whether we sleep or wake, our glass runneth." "Misspend not your short sand-glass," he wrote to another, "for your forenoon is already spent, your afternoon is come, and your night will be on you when you will not see to work." Time and time again Rutherford's familiar image - or the idea of it - presents itself in the course of his writings, and when the author of our hymn laid hold on that image, she also laid hold on the heart-breathings of the Lord's old servant.

"The sands of time are sinking,
The dawn of heaven breaks."

And Rutherford endeavoured to "spend" his own hour-glass well in anticipation of that breaking of the dawn of heaven, and that "summer morn," and that "Immanuel's land." "And if ye be near the water's side," he wrote to an old dying companion, "(as I know ye are) all I can say is this, Sir- that I feel by the smell of that land which is before you, that it is a goodly country."

Now, of course, the thing that made heaven to be heaven for Samuel Rutherford, and made that country to be a "goodly country," was the fact that Christ was there! It was as simple and as straightforward as that. And that sentiment, too, Mrs Anne Cousins grasped admirably and expressed adequately.

"The King there in His beauty,
Without a veil is seen;
It were a well-spent journey,
Though seven deaths lay between:
The Lamb with His fair army
Doth on Mount Zion stand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

No small measure of speculation has gone into trying to figure out the significance if any of "the seven deaths" lying between Rutherford and his "Immanuel's land." Whatever hidden reference there might be, the whole burden of his heart is easily seen in such letters as the one that he wrote to the Church undergoing persecution in Ireland in the 1630s. He is exhorting the

brethren and sisters there to "endure all things" for Christ's sake, and, says he, "For if it were possible that heaven, yea ten heavens, were laid in the balance with Christ, I would think the smell of His breath above them all. Sure I am that He is the far best half of heaven, yea, He is all heaven and more than all heaven; and my testimony of Him is, that ten lives of black sorrow, ten deaths, ten hells of pain, ten furnaces of brimstone ... were all too little for Christ." From such words as that we can see that any journey to Christ would be a well-spent journey in Rutherford's estimation, for then, and only then, would he be sure of seeing "The King " in all His grace and glory, when the "veil" of this present time would be removed from him.

That "veil" of "sense and sin", as another hymn puts it, was as much a reality to the old 17th-century divine as to any child of God in our day. Probe as he would into the deep things of Christ, he still only felt that he was touching the hem of His garment. "We do but play about the borders and margin of the knowledge of Christ," he said, "as children do with the golden covering and silken ribbons of an Arabic Bible that they cannot read." "It would be heaven to me," he wrote to Marion McNaught, "just to look through a hole of heaven's door to see Christ's countenance." However, if Rutherford wasn't able to see the beauty of the King in all His fulness, he could still recognise the King in all His authority, and in all His right, and in all his power. He was in a prison in Aberdeen it was "Christ's palace in Aberdeen." Just as Paul was "the prisoner of Jesus Christ," and not simply Caesar's captive, so the town of Aberdeen was God's penitentiary in His sovereign purposes. If no one else on earth recognised such facts, they were clear to the Lord's prisoner there; "Gold may be gold," he wrote, "and bear the King's stamp upon it, when it is trampled upon by men." However, "Immanuel's Land" would put all things right: "I shall see Him as He is," he said on his death-bed, "I shall see Him reign, and all His fair army with Him." And Rutherford knew, what we all should know, that in heaven there would be perfected for all the saints of God those things that they had only touched-on while on earth below.

"O Christ, He is the fountain,
The deep sweet well of love!
The streams on earth I've tasted,
More deep I'll drink above;
There, to an ocean fulness,
His mercy doth expand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

The difference between earth and heaven is the difference between a stream and an ocean. We may not for one-minute neglect that stream, of course; "We live far from the well," wrote Rutherford, "and complain but dryly of our dryness," "Run your pipe right up to the fountain," he told the Church at Kilmacolm. and my God give us grace in our day to find our source and supply for all our needs in Jesus Christ our Lord, "whom having seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." That "glory" that "dwelleth in Immanuel's land."

"With mercy and with judgment
My web of time He wove,
And aye the dews of sorrow
Were lustred with His love;
I'll bless the hand that guided,
I'll bless the heart that planned,
When throned where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

As said earlier, the difference between earth and heaven to Samuel Rutherford was the difference between a "stream" and "an ocean fulness." On earth, he had tasted the streams of Christ's love, and mercy, and goodness, but it was only in heaven at last that he would drink of that ocean fulness to which those graces of Christ expanded. Be that as it may, however, it was God's earth and Christ's earth that he was called to live on, and he was ever-conscious that it was God's "hand" that guided him through all the windings and the weavings of this present world. It is that sentiment of Rutherford's that Mrs Cousins has laid hold on in the above verse, as well as in one or two other verses of her poem.

Rutherford was a believer in the sovereignty of God, and he was a believer in the sovereignty of God in that most difficult of all the branches of that doctrine - the sovereignty of God in Providence. And he was a believer in the sovereignty of God in Providence at that point where it is most difficult to believe in that branch of the doctrine - when things are going ill for the cause of Christ, and so many of the Providences of God appear to be "cross providences." The very subtitle of the original edition of his letters bespeaks something of the days in which he was called to live in the realm of Scotland: - "Joshua Redivivus, or Mr Rutherford's letters ... now published for the use of all the people of God, but more particularly for those who now are or afterward may be put to suffering, for Christ and His cause." He was a

forerunner in a sense - a Joshua revived - of dark days to come in Scotland. How essential, then, for the true people of God to realise and remember that God weaves our "web of time," with cross-plies of judgment and sorrow, as well as with the uprights of mercy and love. As he expresses it in another way at the hand of Mrs Cousins: -

"But flowers need night's cool darkness,
The moonlight and the dew."

"Paul had need of the devil's service to buffet him." Rutherford wrote to Lady Kenmure, "and far more you and me." "Christ knoweth how to breed the sons of his own house," he wrote to Lord Earlston, the Elder, "and ye will give him leave to take his own way with you." "I see that grace groweth best in winter," he wrote on another occasion.

Such sentiments are not always easy to come to terms with, yet they are an essential part of the Christian's armoury if we are not to be overwhelmed in a day of adversity, whatever form that adversity takes. "Christ had only one summer in his year," he once said, "and shall ye insist on two?" If we received our desserts, then it should be all judgment and all sorrow, but God in His grace weaves in His mercies with His judgments and lustres the dews of sorrow with His love. All of that will become perfectly evident for us,

"When throned where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

And in the meantime, Rutherford exhorts us to exclaim - "Welcome, welcome, Cross of Christ, If Christ be with it." "I look not to win away to my home without wounds and blood," he said, "But, welcome, welcome, Cross of Christ, If Christ be with it."

The verse that begins,

"Oh, I am my Beloved's
and my Beloved's mine,"

sets us right at the heart of the gospel that Samuel Rutherford believed in, and preached, and suffered for.

"Oh, I am my Beloved's
And my Beloved's mine:
He brings a poor vile sinner
Into His house of wine!
I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

When Rutherford was banished to Aberdeen, in the mid 1630s, it was on account of the publication of his work against Arminianism, that view of the gospel that rests on human ability in the things of salvation and makes the work of Christ on the cross to be an indiscriminate work and successful only in so far as the sinner will exercise his own free will to make Christ a Saviour. For Samuel Rutherford, both of those things were unthinkable: he was "a poor vile sinner," and Christ was the victorious Saviour on whose "merit" alone he stood both now, and even in "Immanuel's land" itself. "I am somebody in the books of my friends," he once wrote, "but there are armies of thoughts within me, saying the contrary, and laughing at the mistakes of my many friends. Oh! if my inner side were only seen." "My white side comes out on paper," he said again, "but at home, there is much black work." "I am a wretched captive of sin, yet my Lord can hew heaven out of worse timber than I am if worse there be."

That last quotation just about sums up the whole position: to Rutherford's own estimation there were none more black than himself, for he alone had access into the black places of his own heart and thoughts. But, there were none who could outdo Christ's grace and power with their sin. For that reason, he is always directing the eyes of his readers towards the "merit" of that Christ. "Your heart is not the compass that Christ saileth by," he wrote to Earlston the Younger; and again, "Christ hath engaged you over head and ears to free grace." to another he wrote about "the poor man's market" - "Ho, he that hath no money," he wrote, "that is the poor man's market." and to yet another - "there cannot be a more humble soul than a believer. it is no pride in a drowning man to catch hold of a rock."

On earth, in heaven, there is "no other stand," than on the merit of Jesus Christ the Lord. To Rutherford, his was all the sin, Christ was all the glory; "If Christ should refer the matter to me," he said, "(in His presence I speak it), I might think shame to vote my own salvation."

The final verse in most hymn-books - though not the final verse of the poem - is the one that speaks about that "near and dear union to Christ" that will be accomplished and realised in the realms of Immanuel's land.

"The bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze on glory,
But on my King of grace;
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand:
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land."

It would be a strange kind of a bride who had more thought and eyesight for her wedding dress than for the one she was about to marry on her wedding day. So shall it be with all the elect of God when the marriage feast of the Lamb and His wife is spread. The "garments" of the church's glory will be glorious indeed; but what a proof of full mortification of sin having taken place, that we will have no eyes for our glory, but only for our "Bridegroom's face." "I fear I make more of Christ's love than of Himself," said Rutherford on one occasion: but, as Alexander Whyte tells us, Rutherford well-knew that "to love Christ for Himself alone is the last end of a true believer's love." Heaven is heaven because Christ is there: and heaven is realised as heaven because Christ is beheld there: "The Lamb is all the glory in Immanuel's land."

Although Samuel Rutherford dwelt often on heaven and turned his eye often to heaven, we are in no wise to think that he didn't find his employment on the face of this earth in the work of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. If there was to be a Bride - a Church - in heaven, at last, to gaze on the glory of the King of grace, then God had ordained it that such a Bride should be gathered in on the face of this earth through the work and through the labours of those already numbered among the redeemed. So, Rutherford speaks of manys a burden and manys a wakeful hour he gave to this question - "how to have Christ betrothed with a bride in that part of the land" that was known as Anwoth. "Oh, when shall the Lamb's wife be ready, " he said, "and the Bridegroom say, Come?" "Hasten the marriage day," he wrote on another occasion.

There is no tension between walking aright on the face of this earth and having an eye to heaven at last. It is God's earth that we walk upon, and

under God's eye that we do walk; and it is to God's heaven that we are going by the grace of the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us. As we sing Mrs Cousins' Rutherfordian hymn, we might well remember that fact.

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As stated in the introduction to this article "The five or six verses that are normally sung under the above title are taken from a nineteen verse poem." The poem first appeared in the Christian Treasury of 1857 and are an excellent insight to the spiritual thoughts of Samuel Rutherford.

Appendix (2)

"The Sands of Time are Sinking"
The Full Poem
By Mrs Ann Cousins.

The sands of time are sinking,
The dawn of Heaven breaks,
The summer morn I've sighed for,
The fair sweet morn awakes;
Dark, dark hath been the midnight,
But dayspring is at hand,
And glory – glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

Oh! well it is for ever,
Oh! well for evermore,
My nest hung in no forest
Of all this death-doom'd shore:
Yea, let the vain world vanish,
As from the ship the strand,
While glory – glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

There the Red Rose of Sharon
Unfolds its heartsome bloom,
And fills the air of Heaven
With ravishing perfume: -
Oh! to behold its blossom,
While by its fragrance fann'd
Where glory – glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

The King there in His beauty,
Without a veil, is seen:
It were a well-spent journey,
Though seven deaths lay between.
The Lamb, with His fair army,
Doth on Mount Zion stand,
And glory – glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

Oh! Christ He is the Fountain,
The deep sweet well of love!
The streams on earth I've tasted,
More deep I'll drink above:
There, to an ocean fullness,
His mercy doth expand,
And glory – glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

E'en Anwoth was not heaven –
E'en preaching was not Christ;
And in my sea-beat prison
My Lord and I held tryst:
And aye my murkiest storm-cloud
Was by a rainbow spann'd
Caught from the glory dwelling
In Immanuel's land.

But that He build a heaven
Of His surpassing love,
A little New Jerusalem,
Like to the one above, -
“Lord, take me o’er the water,”
Had been my loud demand,
“Take me to love’s own country,
Unto Immanuel’s land.”

But flowers need night’s cool darkness
The moonlight and the dew;
So Christ, from one who loved it,
His shining oft withdrew;
And then for cause of absence,
My troubled soul I scann’d –
But Glory, shadeless, shineth
In Immanuel’s land.

The little birds of Anwoth
I used to count them blest, -
Now, beside happier altars
I go to build my nest:
O’er these there broods no silence,
No graves around them stand,
For glory, deathless, dwelleth
In Immanuel’s land.

Fair Anwoth by the Solway,
To me thou still art dear!
E’en from the verge of Heaven
I drop for thee a tear.
Oh! if one soul from Anwoth
Meet me at God’s right hand,
My Heaven will be two Heavens,
In Immanuel’s land.

I have wrestled on towards Heaven,
'Gainst storm, and wind, and tide:-
Now like a weary traveller,
That leaneth on his guide,
Amid the shades of evening,
While sinks life's ling'ring sand,
I hail the glory dawning
From Immanuel's land.

Deep waters cross'd life's pathway,
The hedge of thorns was sharp;
Now these lie all behind me –
Oh! for a well-tuned harp!
Oh! to join Hallelujah
With yon triumphant band,
Who sing, where glory dwelleth,
In Immanuel's land.

With mercy and with judgment
My web of time He wove,
And aye the dews of sorrow
Were lustred with His love.
I'll bless the hand that guided,
I'll bless the heart that plann'd,
When throned where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

Soon shall the cup of glory
Wash down earth's bitterest woes,
Soon shall the desert-briar
Break into Eden's rose:
The curse shall change to blessing –
The name on earth that's bann'd,
Be graven on the white stone
In Immanuel's land.

Oh! I am my Beloved's
And my Beloved is mine!
He brings a poor vile sinner
Into his "House of wine."
I stand upon his merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

I shall sleep sound in Jesus
Fill'd with His likeness rise.
To live and to adore Him,
To see Him with these eyes
'Tween me and resurrection
But Paradise doth stand;
Then – then for glory dwelling
In Immanuel's land!

I have borne scorn and hatred,
I have borne wrong and shame,
Earth's proud ones have reproach'd me,
For Christ's thrice blessed name: -
Where God His seal set fairest
They've stamp'd their foulest brand;
But judgment shines like noonday
In Immanuel's land.

They've summoned me before them,
But there I may no come, -
My Lord says, "Come up hither, "
My Lord says, "Welcome Home!"
My kingly King, at His white throne,
My presence doth command,
Where glory – glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

Amen and Amen.