



Children eating their Christmas dinner in the 1930s
Turnips, Cabbage and Love ...

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. (1 John 3:1)

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)

I do not recall having written a devotion on this hymn in days past, though I may have. If I did, I can assure you that this one will not resemble the first.

As with many hymns, this one sprang forth from the heart that bore much loss and sorrow, yet the rose grew around the corner of the wall into the sunlight of love. The author is a Swedish lady named Karolina W. Sandell-Berg in 1858. The hymn was written shortly after the tragic death of Karolina's father, who fell overboard into the sea and drowned before Karolina's eyes. But the Holy Spirit whispered into a heart that was keen to hear the words of comfort contained in this hymn and inspired a distraught heart with hope. The musical score is *Tryggare Kan Ingen Vara* by Oskar Ahnfelt.

No man or woman is born into this world as an adopted child of God. We are all born with a deadly disease coursing through our veins called SIN! In order to be a son or daughter of human parents, we must be born into that family. The same is true of God's family. If we are to lay claim to that birthright of son or daughter of God, we, too, must be born into His family. "*How can that be?*" mused the well-educated Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born*

of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? (John 3:5-9) How, indeed, can these things be? Jesus explained: *For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.* (John 3:20-21)

Who are the sons and daughters of God whom He has admitted as children of the adoption? It is those whom He has called, chosen, and received the faith and testimony of Jesus in their hearts. *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.* (Acts 2:21)

Children of the Heavenly Father

Children of the heav'nly Fathe
rSafely in His bosom gather;
Nestling bird nor star in Heaven
Such a refuge e'er was given.

God His own doth tend and nourish;
In His holy courts they flourish;
From all evil things He spares them;
In His mighty arms He bears them.

Neither life nor death shall ever
From the Lord His children sever;
Unto them His grace He showeth,
And their sorrows all He knoweth.

Though He giveth or He taketh,
God His children ne'er forsaketh;
His the loving purpose solely
To preserve them pure and holy.

Lo, their very hairs He numbers,
And no daily care encumbers
Them that share His ev'ry blessing
And His help in woes distressing.

Praise the Lord in joyful numbers:
Your Protector never slumbers.
At the will of your Defender
Ev'ry foeman must surrender.

Children of the heav'nly Father Safely in His bosom gather; Nestling bird nor star in Heaven Such a refuge e'er was given. I hope the reader will stop to consider the great privilege of being a child of the Heavenly Father, and heir to all that Christ has made available to us in that glorious inheritance. All who fall asleep in the arms of the Angel of Death shall be kept secure and certain in the bosom of Abraham shared by the beggar Lazarus. Our security exceeds that of the nestling bird, and the vastly dispersed stars of Heaven. Our refuge is eternal, and the stars shall vanish in the twinkling of an eye.

God His own doth tend and nourish; In His holy courts they flourish; From all

evil things He spares them; In His mighty arms He bears them. Why does God discriminate between His own Children and the unregenerate sinner? Because He loves the repentant and humble heart, but He hates the workers of iniquity. *The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.* (Psalm 5:5) A magnet is made of like metal to that to which it is attracted. The natures must be alike in order for the magnet to draw. So it is with the Children of God made after His image and likeness. God does not remove the pits and swamps from our path in life, but He does carry us through those hard places when we trust in Him as our Father. He carries us!

Neither life nor death shall ever From the Lord His children sever; Unto them His grace He showeth, And their sorrows all He knoweth. I love the powerful and profound truth expressed in this line. God loves us, and if we are like metal with Him in nature, we will be drawn to that love and enabled to love Him too. But that Love of God has no limits. There is no power known to man as strong as the bonds of Love in which Christ holds us. It does, like Christ, overcome death and is not subject to death. *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Romans 8:38-39) Need we any greater assurance? On those moments of tragic loss, when no one can know our pain and suffering, One does know - our Lord Jesus Christ. We can feel no pain, no sorrow, or no rejection that our Lord has not already suffered a hundredfold.

Though He giveth or He taketh, God His children ne'er forsaketh; His the loving purpose solely To preserve them pure and holy. God takes nothing FROM Us. Even the life of a dear child, shortened by tragedy, is not taken from us. It was a gift for the few years that we could embrace the child, then it has returned to the giver for safe-keeping until we shall be able to go to him. Tragedy to us may not be tragedy as we suppose, but some hidden blessing may accompany the loss. He is painting the mosaic of our lives, and the painting never knows its object until the last brush stroke is applied.

Lo, their very hairs He numbers, And no daily care encumbers Them that share His ev'ry blessing And His help in woes distressing. Not only does He know the hairs of our head, but it is by His power that the life of every cell of our body is sustained. He knows the course and precise length of our days, and He watches us. He is, as Hagar says, The Lord who Seeth Me! If we have unbearable burdens, it is because we have failed to cast them upon the Lord. He will always carry them for us so that our sorrows are abated. When our sorrows and disappointments are greatest, He may be nearest us as He was with the two men on the Road to Damascus sorrowing over the events of the crucifixion of their Lord.

Praise the Lord in joyful numbers: Your Protector never slumbers. At the will of your Defender Ev'ry foeman must surrender. We praise the Lord in the covert of our closets, and also in the congregation of the righteous. Our public praise is expressed in our Common Worship in the Church. God never sleeps though we slumber too often. The Battle has not only been joined against the wicked, but Victory has been accomplished through the benefits of our Savior Jesus Christ. Are you enrolled in His Army?