



THEN said Jesus to them again, *Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.* ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost:* ²³ *Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.* (John 20:21-23)

This is a glorious Pentecost (WhitSunday) Hymn – a gift of the Lutheran Hymnist, Paul Gerhardt of German, 1676, and Johann Christian Jacobi (1725). The present form of the hymn is rendered by that great minister and hymn composer (Rock of Ages), Augustus Toplady in 1776. Toplady is one of my favorite clergymen:

Augustus Montague Toplady, the author of Rock of Ages, was born in Farmham, Surrey, 4 November 1740. His father was an officer in the British Army. His mother was a woman of remarkable piety.. He prepared for the university at Westminster School, and subsequently graduated at Trinity College, Dublin. While on a visit in Ireland in his sixteenth year he was awakened and converted at a service held in a barn in Codymain. The text was Ephesians 2:13. *“But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”* The preacher was an illiterate but warm-hearted layman named Morris. Concerning this experience Toplady wrote, ‘Strange that I, who so long sat under the means of grace in England, should be brought nigh unto God in an obscure part of Ireland, amidst a handful of God’s people met together in a barn, and under the ministry of one who could hardly spell his name. Surely, this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous.’ Hymnary.org

The hymn is a tribute to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and the blessings pertaining thereto.

Holy Ghost, dispel our Sadness

Holy Ghost, dispel our sadness,
pierce the clouds of sinful night;
come, O source of sweetest gladness,
breathe your life and spread your light.
Loving Spirit, God of peace,
great distributor of grace,
rest upon this congregation;
hear, O hear our supplication.

From that height which knows no measure,
as a gracious show'r descend;
bringing down the richest treasure
man can wish or God can send.
Heav'nly Glory, shining down
from the Father and the Son,
grant us your illumination;
rest upon this congregation.

Come, O best of all donations
God can give or we implore;
having your sweet consolations
we need wish for nothing more.
Come with unction and with pow'r,
on our souls your graces show'r;
author of the new creation,
make our hearts your habitation

1 Holy Ghost, dispel our sadness, pierce the clouds of sinful night; come, O source of sweetest gladness, breathe your life and spread your light. Loving Spirit, God of peace, great distributor of grace, rest upon this congregation; hear, O hear our supplication. Though the Holy Ghost is sent as our Comforter during our separation from our Lord Jesus Christ. That comfort should derive from a better knowledge and understanding of Holy Scripture which it is his role to bring to our remembrance from the Holy Bible. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Bread of Heaven and is also the very WORD of God. We must feed upon a steady diet of the Word day by day, and that Word is made digestible by the Holy Spirit. The night of sin covers a considerable portion of our day here on earth; however, when the breath of God is breathed into our spiritual hearts by the Holy Spirit, we are made eternally living souls just as Adam was made a living soul whose privilege was curtailed by sin. The Holy Spirit reads our hearts and aids our prayers to reach the Throne of Mercy.

2 From that height which knows no measure, as a gracious show'r descend; bringing down the richest treasure man can wish or God can send. Heav'nly Glory, shining down from the Father and the Son, grant us your illumination; rest upon this congregation. Though that height separating God from His elect is immeasurable in physical terms, the spiritual separation could suffer no razor to go between. The Holy ghost proceeds from the Father and son just as when our Lord Jesus Christ breathed upon the disciples in our leading text and "*saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost,*"

and it was done! The Holy Ghost is the omnipresent vicegerent of our Lord on earth whose movements are not divided by time or a physical body. How often have we prayed with seeming power and understanding when suddenly, we know, without shadow of doubt, that Holy Ghost has joined that prayer to Two in Heaven. The Holy Ghost does not make new truth but rather sheds illuminating light on the truth already expressed in Holy Writ.

3 Come, O best of all donations God can give or we implore; having your sweet consolations we need wish for nothing more. Come with unction and with pow'r, on our souls your graces show'r; author of the new creation, make our hearts your habitation. Do you not suppose the powerful presence of the Holy Ghost at the humble barnyard service at which Augustus Toplady came to the Throne of Grace – led there by an illiterate layman? Stricken by the Holy Ghost, we have no volition but to receive the gift offered. He is, as described in the closing words of Frances Thompson's *Hound of Heaven*:

Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?
Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of any love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee,
Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!
Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
'Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me.'

O Rabbit-Man or Woman, if you have not been driven to ground yet, do you not hear the baying of the *Hound* in pursuit of your pitiful soul? The danger you fear is a glorious blessing!