

Devotion on Hymns of the Church (Hymn 179 - The Day Thou Gavest, Lord) – 14 May 2014, Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord)



“Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.” (Psalms 42:8)

In my opinion, this is the most touching and meaningful evening hymn in the 1940 Hymnal. The words were written by John Ellerton in 1870. There are two choice tunes to which the hymn may be sung. The older tune is that of Louis (*Loys*) Bourgeois, the famous French composer who wrote many of the tunes for the Calvinist hymns. He also wrote the tune to Old Hundreth (Doxology) and the tune for this hymn under study – *Bourgeois* – is the same suggested for Nunc Dimittis, in 1551. The second, and more popular, tune for this hymn of today is that of the Rev. Clement Cotteril Scholefield of Birmingham, England. It is called, *St. Clement*, and was written in 1874.

After a long day of toil and travel, what a blessing that God provides a rest for His people – not only at the end of an earthly day, but at the conclusion of one’s heavenly pilgrimage upon the earth. The Christian may recite, with renewed assurance, the words of that old Evening Prayer for Families found on page 594 of the 1928 Book of Common Prayer:

**O** LORD, support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in thy mercy grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. *Amen.*

I suppose our main concern at the close of the long day of life is to know that our work, that the Lord has given us, is truly done. That knowledge will enable us to go before our Maker with a satisfied mind.

## The Day thou Gavest, Lord, is Ended

The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended,  
The darkness falls at Thy behest;  
To Thee our morning hymns ascended,  
Thy praise shall sanctify our rest.

We thank Thee that Thy church, unsleeping,  
While earth rolls onward into light,  
Through all the world her watch is keeping,  
And rests not now by day or night.

As o'er each continent and island  
The dawn leads on another day,  
The voice of prayer is never silent,  
Nor dies the strain of praise away.

The sun that bids us rest is waking  
Our brethren 'neath the western sky,  
And hour by hour fresh lips are making  
Thy wondrous doings heard on high.

So be it, Lord; Thy throne shall never,  
Like earth's proud empires, pass away:  
Thy kingdom stands, and grows forever,  
Till all Thy creatures own Thy sway.

*"The day thou gavest, Lord, is ended, the darkness falls at thy behest; to thee our morning hymns ascended, thy praise shall sanctify our rest."* First of all, do we stop to consider at nightfall that this day – and every other day of our lives under the sun, were given us by the Lord? God began the Creation of the world in abject darkness, and completed it with the morning of Light; ". . . and the *evening* and the *morning* were the first day." If we are true Anglicans, and not free-spirited heathen, we will begin each day with prayer and songs of praise. "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee." (Psalms 63:1-3) Believe it or not, the 63rd Psalm was General George S. Patton's favorite of all. That 'rest' that accompanies praise does, indeed, sanctify our rest. The days come and go in the cycle established by God's Law of Nature from the beginning. But there will come a day when the fever of life is over and God will close the Curtain of Life at His own behest.

*"We thank thee that thy Church, unsleeping while earth rolls onward into light, through all the world her watch is keeping and rests not now by day nor night."* If this refrain were literally true, the world would revert to that haven of peace that existed in America, England, France, German, Russia, and the Asian countries when the Word of God was their governor. Unfortunately, this is not the case today. Instead of sleeping during the hours of darkness, the church has become participant in the works of darkness. Instead of being a sweet savor to the world, the Church has flung open her gates to the world itself and has become accomplice with its sins. She is fasting from her righteous deeds and feasting on the unrighteous deeds of the world.

*"As o'er each continent and island the dawn leads on another day, the voice of prayer is never silent, nor dies the strain of praise away."* Thank God, this refrain is literally true. In old Egypt, there was a day when the dreadful Angel of Death hovered over the land and took away the first-born of every family – except in the Land of Goshen where the door posts and lintels were covered with the blood of an innocent lamb – a lamb that pre-figured that Lamb of God which would come to our salvation in the fullness of time. When we traveled to the Philippines for the AOC, to Fiji, to the Solomon Chain of Islands, and to the African countries, we witnessed a humble and joyous pleading for the Lord's presence by Prayer, Song, and Praise. The melody and rich tenor of voices accented the faith that compelled the expression of music. *"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea."* (Isaiah 11:11)

*"The sun that bids us rest is waking our brethren 'neath the western sky, and hour by hour fresh lips are making thy wondrous doings heard on high."* The same Sun of Righteousness that rises on the eastern horizon of our souls and gives life, is the same that sinks beneath that western horizon in the dusk of time to give way to the Evening Star - that is also the Bright and Morning Star. Our praises should not be mantras of nonsense, but true accounts of the glorious works of God. Is that not the point of the classical hymns? Do they not incorporate in their lines biblical doctrine and praise of His works?

*"So be it, Lord; thy throne shall never, like earth's proud empires, pass away; thy kingdom stands, and grows for ever, till all thy creatures own thy sway."* "So be it!" (the Great AMEN!) The Throne of the King of Kings is an Eternal Regime of Light and Love. It has no end – neither did it have a beginning! The empires of the world are built upon the shifting sands of time. Ozymandias was such a ruler and empire of which Shelley wrote:

### OZYMANDIAS

I met a traveller from an antique land  
Who said: `Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,

And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.

And on the pedestal these words appear –  
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.'

*Percy Bysshe Shelley*

There will be a time in the glorious Eternity future in which every creature and soul shall conform to that perfect Will of God – not by force, but by love perfected. Christ will truly be as He should be to us today – our **"All in All."**