

Devotion on Hymns of the Church - Hymn 214 – *O Perfect Love* – 9 February 2016, Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord)



What God has joined together, let man not separate.

Matthew 19:6

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:12-13

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

Ephesians 5:1-2

Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 1:4-6

which exists between Christ and His Church. *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.* (Eph 5:25-28)

The author of the lyrics was Dorothy Gurney in 1883. The tune was composed by Joseph Barnaby on the occasion of the wedding of Princess Louise of Wales in 1890.

There are at least two alternate tunes, but neither is as descriptive of the properties of pure and perfect love as this one that is provided in the 1940 Hymnal.

O Perfect Love

O perfect Love, all human thought transcending,
Lowly we kneel in prayer before Thy throne,
That theirs may be the love which knows no ending,
Whom Thou forevermore dost join in one.

Grant them the joy which brightens earthly sorrow;
Grant them the peace which calms all earthly strife,
And to life's day the glorious unknown morrow
That dawns upon eternal love and life.

Hear us, O Father, gracious and forgiving,
Through Jesus Christ, Thy coeternal Word,
Who, with the Holy Ghost, by all things living
Now and to endless ages art adored.

"O perfect Love, all human thought transcending, Lowly we kneel in prayer before Thy throne, That theirs may be the love which knows no ending, Whom Thou forevermore dost join in one. I have it on good authority (the Apostle Paul) there is no greater power under Heaven than the unadulterated love showered down upon us by God. To the extent that we love others, it is evidence of the sharing of that endless reservoir of Love on deposit in the Heart of God. In fact, love is the only power mortal man can claim (from God) that survives even 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) The love of God is altogether perfect and immutable. The limitless love of God surpasses all human reason and understanding. We can only understand that love in the limited way in which a baby knows his mother loves him, but cannot fathom the reason.

We are to be reverent and humble before the Majesty of our Lord. It is for this reason that Reformation Anglicans kneel in prayer, and stand at the reading of the Gospel. We do observe a reflective silence in the minutes preceding the worship hour, and we dress no differently than we would dress if we have an appointment with the Queen of England or with the president of our various nations. If the Elect of God are the citizens of the Kingdom of God, is not God our Sovereign who demands reverence! Just as a man and woman are joined together as one in marriage, so is the Christian joined as One with Christ when he becomes a faithful member of His Body - the Church - and we all, as various organs of that Body, have diverse functions and talents in the functioning of the Body.

Unfortunately, in our day, the institution of marriage has been perverted by the filthy hands of hypocrites and unbelievers. In the Creation Model, God created one man for one woman and gave them the first commandment recorded in Scripture: *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.* (Gen 1:28b) Any reprehensible union of two men cannot meet the demands of this Creation Model. The human soul is endowed with a fabulous array of talents and skills above every creature on earth. Man is the crowning achievement of God's Creation; however, beware of the awesome responsibility that greater blessing and intellect entail. We are to love all of God's creatures that He has placed under our dominion and never abuse or misuse and such creature. He has clothed the skylark in beauty; so who is man, to

whom God gave responsibility to care for such creatures, to hurt or disfigure such beauty.

Grant them the joy which brightens earthly sorrow; Grant them the peace which calms all earthly strife, And to life's day the glorious unknown morrow That dawns upon eternal love and life. Indeed did God bless the crowning achievement of His creative genius - And God blessed them (Gen 1:28) - and His loving will for man in taking dominion was that man should care for, maintain, and love every creature as God has loved all of His Creation. Therein has man failed miserably. God gave us joy to see the early morning dews dissipate with the glorious beauty of the morning sunrise. Just as God began His Creation in abject darkness, He finished the same in resplendent light of day. So the night sorrows are forgotten with the bursting forth of light day by day. The peace that God gives is not an external peace that is dependent upon outside circumstances, but an INTERNAL and Holy peace held in the safe of our hearts whose doors cannot be forced by worldly concerns.

It is true, as well, that this life is not even a day and a night compared to the expanse of timeless eternity to which all men are bound. We shall all spend an eternity in some place – either Heaven or Hell. *Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.* (Job 14:1-2) *Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.* (James 4:14) But accenting this last appraisal of the shortness of this earthly life is the contrasting reality to that love-borne eternity with our Father in Heaven. The seemingly long night of sorrows shall be met with the joyful sunrise of our Lord's Coming for His own. *But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.* (Mal 4:2) And all of these benefits are secured to us by the power of that great property of God called 'LOVE.' ***For God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.***

Hear us, O Father, gracious and forgiving, Through Jesus Christ, Thy coeternal Word, Who, with the Holy Ghost, by all things living Now and to endless ages art adored. How many prayers are wafted on high without the singular intent to learn God's will but, rather, to express our own 'wishes' without caring for a response? God is not a fairy God Mother upon whom we can impose our own wills and desires. We pray for His Will – and not our own – to be done; and, in the end, we will see that His Will was wiser and more beneficial for us than our own wills (that are informed by sinful desires). In fact, our wills are only free when we have accepted God's will as our own. Then, and only then, can we expect God to 'Hear us.' Jesus Christ is, Himself, the Word Eternal and the "express image of His Father."

Our hymn of Perfect Love today is sealed with the perfect expression of that **LOVE** in the Triune God who sees all, knows all, and is Sovereign of all. We can only have a will that is free when we have taken upon ourselves that *Mind which was in Christ Jesus.* (1 Cor 2:16)

Is that same God in Three Persons your Sovereign as well, or do you go about claiming a free will that is in total bondage to the world and its Prince, and not free at all?