

Hymns of the Church - Hymn 398 - *Father, Whate'er of Earthly Bliss* – 7 July 2015, Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord)



At the special request of a dear friend:

*Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.* (Psalms 100:4)

*<sup>9</sup> Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. <sup>10</sup> But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.* (1 Cor 2:9-10)

This deeply reverential hymn, and its most commonly accompanying tune, commends itself to the devout and humble - even to little children whose hearts can often grasp truths that escape the pseudo-sophistication of the most accomplished theologians. The verses were selected by the prolific hymn-writer and preacher of the Gospel, Augustus Toplady, 1740-1778 (other hymns: *Rock of Ages*, *If on a Quiet Sea*, and *Object of my First Desire*, among more than 500 others). He chose these three verses from among seven others of a poem, *Desiring Resignation and Thankfulness* by Anne Steele (1760). The most popular tune for the hymn is "NAOMI" by Hans G. Nageli, arranged by Lowell Mason in 1836. An alternate tune is *LYSTRA* by Charles Wesley.

It will be noteworthy for the reader to learn of how Augustus Toplady came to know Christ. "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 was 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 ii. 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 had 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.'"

Toplady served as an Anglican minister all of his adult life which was short, Toplady having lived only to the age of 38 years.

### Father, Whate'er of Earthly Bliss

Father, whate'er of earthly bliss  
Thy sovereign will denies,  
Accepted at Thy throne, let this  
My humble prayer, arise:

Give me a calm and thankful heart,  
From every murmur free;  
The blessing of Thy grace impart,  
And make me live to Thee.

Let the sweet hope that Thou art mine  
My life and death attend,  
Thy presence through my journey shine,  
And crown my journey's end.

*Father, whate'er of earthly bliss Thy sovereign will denies, Accepted at Thy throne, let this My humble prayer, arise:* In the Providence of God, some of His most devout servants are destined to live out their lives in Wilderness places, yet, even His beauty paints the distant dunes as well as the fertile meadows. I received a note from a dear friend this morning who is taking an interlude of her labors in a mountain home. She awoke before the rest of the family and sat on the porch overlooking a lake. She must have felt an immense solitude in seeing the early morning vapors rising in the dawn from the lake. She was alone - except for the gentle presence of God to say, "See, I am here with you as you enjoy the rapture of this moment, alone." But God's will is, indeed, sovereign and not subject to our frivolous whimsies. He knows, far better than we do, what is best for us. Sometimes He gives us castor oil instead of orange juice. We pray that our prayers are consistent with that which is acceptable at His Throne of Grace, else, the prayer will not be answered according to OUR wills, but HIS!

*Give me a calm and thankful heart, From every murmur free; The blessing of Thy grace impart, And make me live to Thee.* A calm and faithful heart is a gift of grace, too. The anxious and ungracious heart is that heart we bring before God at the beginning of our salvation for healing - and He does! There is one behavior that is quite displeasing to God whether it is overt, or covert - that sin of murmuring! Murmuring is the cowardly questioning of the will and wisdom of God in leading us. A soldier on the battlefield is trained not to murmur at the command to go forward - there is no time for it in the face of the enemy. The Christian soldier is constantly on the battlefield. We trust the Captain and Bishop of our souls to know the enemy, the terrain, and the proper approach to take in the battle. We are "*Onward, Christian Soldiers*" - not sniveling spiritual cowards! The grace of God is a calming balm that heals our inclinations of rebellion and disobedience. IT makes us more like the One whose Name has been written in our hearts and on our persons - Christ. If we bear the Name, we must bear the likeness as well. I have features, in both physical appearance and personal habit, that are derived from my mother and father. But it is to be well desired that we will bear an even greater affinity to that One Savior who purchased our liberty and cut our chains asunder by His own death on the cross. All that we live for on earth should we a reflection of that righteousness that purchased our redemption for Heaven.

*Let the sweet hope that Thou art mine My life and death attend, Thy presence through my journey shine, And crown my journey's end.* This first line of the third verse may seem

slightly off center to some Christians, however, it is Gospel truth. At the moment of death, to know that Jesus is OUR Savior, Lord, and King is the utmost and final bliss. It cannot be true that He is ours, if we are not, correspondingly, His. <sup>20</sup> *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;* <sup>21</sup> *That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.* <sup>22</sup> *And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:* <sup>23</sup> *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.* (John 17:20-23) He is with us whithersoever we go in life's journey - both through the mountain heights (which are many), as well as the Valley of the Shadow of Death. At the very last glimmer of life in the soul of His saints, they will feel His hand grasping theirs, drawing them higher and higher - so strong, and yet so very gentle. It is as the twinkling of an eye - the same eye they close in death will be the same which opens at the instant of death to behold, as the blind Fanny Crosby did, their Savior face-to-face.

<sup>51</sup> *Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,* <sup>52</sup> *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.* <sup>53</sup> *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.* <sup>54</sup> *So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.* <sup>55</sup> *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* <sup>56</sup> *The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.* <sup>57</sup> *But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* (1 Cor 15:51-57)

Here are provided verses to Anne Steel's poem that are not included in the above hymn, but perhaps should have been: <sup>1</sup> *When I survey life's varied scene, Amid the darkest hours, Sweet rays of comfort shine between, And thorns are mix'd with flowers.* <sup>2</sup> *Lord, teach me to adore thy hand, From whence my comforts flow; And let me in this desert land A glimpse of Canaan know.* <sup>5</sup> *In griefs and pains thy sacred word, (Dear solace of my soul!) Celestial comforts can afford, And all their power controul.* <sup>6</sup> *When present sufferings pain my heart, Or future terrors rise, And light and hope almost depart From these dejected eyes:* <sup>7</sup> *Thy powerful word supports my hope, Sweet cordial of the mind! And bears my fainting spirit up, And bids me wait resign'd.* The poem is beautiful, and inspired Toplady to compose a beautiful hymn from it. Each of us, as children of God, should inspire those around us to built upon the works of the Lord in which He has given us a part, to glorify, more and more, the Lord who made us and saved us from ourselves.