

HIDDEN IN THE HYMNS

RIVERS HOUSEAL



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HIDDEN IN THE HYMNS

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*To the congregants of
Grace Covenant Church,
who taught me to love hymns
by singing them with me
every Lord's Day.*

*I'll walk through life with
a rooted understanding of
what "Church family" means
because of each one of you.*

*What a delight it will be to sing
with you for eternity!*

*"Your statutes have been my songs in the house
of my sojourning." — PSALM 119:54 (ESV)*

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DEAR CHILDREN

I wrote this book for you.

At the time I'm writing this, I'm not much older than you are, most likely, so I remember what it's like to be your age. I grew up in a Christian family. As far back as I remember, I've believed that Jesus is my Lord. But when I was younger, I would hear the grown-ups, and even some of my friends, talking about the love they had for Jesus ... and I realized I didn't completely understand what they meant. I didn't quite feel this love, joy, and comfort they were always talking about—at least not as much as they apparently did. What was I missing? “Jesus is my Savior, too,” I thought to myself. “So why don't I feel about Him like they do?” Have you ever asked yourself that question?

I wondered about this especially when our church sang hymn lines like this one: “*Thou, O Christ, art all I want.*” Truly? Nothing else? I couldn't honestly say that, I realized.

But I knew I wanted to be able to say it. Don't you? I wanted to truthfully say that Christ really is “*all I want*”! I wanted all the rival “wants” weeded out of my heart until there was nothing left to grow there but love for my King Jesus. And the Holy Spirit has been showing me that He is doing that weeding for me. It's slow work, but every day He is helping me understand *how* to love Jesus.

He has used two things in particular to teach me: God's Word, and hymns.

Now, we must be very clear: hymns are not Scripture. They are man's words, not God's. But good hymns *are* true—and that's the sort of hymns I've

collected into this book. Good hymns come from hymnwriters who see what God's Word teaches, then sing about it.

Would you like to know how to sing about Christ as if He is truly the most precious thing to you? These hymns remind you over and over again what Jesus Christ has done for you (and what He's still doing). So they fill you up with gratitude and love for Him, and at the same time they give you the words to tell Him about it.

So sing these hymns like you mean them, my friends! Let's practice filling the air with our joyful praises now, because we will be singing together for all eternity.

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DEAR PARENTS

I was four years old when I first met a hymnal. I proceeded to grow up on it. Those hymns, the ancient and the new, have played in my head while I played with dolls, or was supposed to be doing long division, or was building my next fort in the woods. I have loved those hymns as long as I've known them, and it sure feels like they have loved me.

But that does not mean I've always understood them.

Picture a six, eight, or even ten-year-old me standing in front of a pew. Red hymnal in hand, I'm belting out, "*All hail the pow'r of Jesus' name! / Let angels prostrate fall / Bring forth the royal diadem / To crown Him Lord of All.*"

Such richness! But eight-year-old me was thinking, "The hail is gonna do what to the angels? And what's a diadem? Huh ... catchy tune, though."

Here's another example. "*The earth with its store of wonders untold / Almighty, your pow'r has founded of old / Has 'stablished it fast by a changeless decree / And 'round it has cast, like a mantle, the sea.*"

"Stablished ... mantle ... you mean like the thing over our fireplace?"

The hymns of old are rich, and drip Scripture from every corner. What better to be playing on repeat in a child's head? But in order for a child to love these hymns as they really deserve to be loved, he or she will need to know *what the hymn is talking about*. It's hard to appreciate what you don't understand. But if a few generations go by paying scanty heed to these hymns, they're in danger of going the way of cuneiform.

My intention is *not* to rewrite the old hymns, to make them "new," nor "relevant and contemporary." Bede the Venerable wrote a hymn in the mid-7th century saying that Christ will return again in the same way the Apostles saw Him go, and that He is worthy of all praise and glory. Is that not still true? If it is (and it is), how could anyone possibly argue that this hymn is not relevant *and* contemporary—even if it is now over 1,300 years old? One might argue that

the Venerable Bede’s hymn is outdated because it’s archaic in language. Very well... then let’s learn to read archaic English, shall we? We don’t stop teaching Latin or Koine Greek just because you can’t order french fries with them.

And other than reading the Word of God itself, how could a child better grasp the concept of our God being the God of Ages than by singing something true that his brother or sister in Christ penned 1,000 years ago?

To that end, I wrote this book. I want to help children understand these hymns, so that they will be enriched by them as I have been. Each hymn in this book comes with a paraphrase, presented stanza by stanza. I’m not trying to add meaning to these hymns; I’m simply peeling away the archaic layer for a moment so that a child can understand what they see when I put it back. And I do put it back. I give the vocabulary “translation” of a stanza first and then give the original stanza, because I don’t want anyone to walk away with my words in their head. Know and understand the ideas you will be meeting, and then hear Paul Gerhardt or Isaac Watts or Augustus Toplady say it better than I can.

I expect someone will ask me, “Why didn’t you include [fill in the blank with a beloved hymn]?” There are two possible reasons: first, there’s a good chance I simply wasn’t aware that particular hymn existed. My apologies; I’ll get duly acquainted with it post haste. Second, perhaps I left it out on purpose—not necessarily meaning I don’t like it. I took many hymns off my list because I realized they were clear without any paraphrase at all.

I trust that a number of these hymns will be familiar to Christians across most denominations, but I also fully expect that the average evangelical hasn’t heard of half these hymns. (Confession: many of them *I* hadn’t heard of until recently, even though they had been living in the hymnal beneath my nose for years.) These forgotten hymns made the cut because they have been *wrongly* ignored. I hope to have the privilege of introducing you to new friends.

It is my hope that whenever you set this book down, you walk away with poetry running between your ears, even if you don’t know its tune. You can find recordings online for many of these hymns, so listen to them if you can... or better still, find an old hymnal and learn them yourself. With each hymn, you will see a list of tunes the hymn has been set to over the ages. I’ve provided wee biographies for some of the hymnwriters and hymn-translators, too.

If you're new to old hymns, then prepare yourself. You will be challenged; you will be comforted. But watch the effect on your children: the young souls in your home will be trained and molded by the repetition of truth, beautifully stated. Their vocabulary is going to grow by an oxgang. Young wordsmiths-in-the-making will soak up all sorts of goodness from the stellar poetry of these hymns that will grow them up into better writers, poets, and songwriters... maybe even *hymn*writers.

I am not one to say that Christians should only be singing old hymns. New and wonderful hymns are being written even now. There was a day when "Jesus, Lover of My Soul" was new. But there is a reason these old hymns have survived the centuries, and the frank truth is that they offer a theological depth (and therefore, a comfort) that Christian pop radio does not.

We'll be singing for all eternity, so I propose that we start now. Get thee busy.

A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD

By **MARTIN LUTHER** (see page 310), 1529; inspired by Psalm 46
Originally written in German; translated by **FREDERICK HENRY HEDGE**
Set to the tune *Ein Feste Burg*

God is a mighty fortress, a wall of defense that will never fail to protect us. (Psalm 46:1, Isaiah 25:1-5) *He* is our helper while we live in this world, feeling like we're drowning in a flood of sin and evil. (Jonah 4, Psalm 46:2-3) For it's very true that our ancient enemy, Satan, is still trying to hurt us, to ruin us—Satan's cleverness and his power are great, and he hates God's people far more than we can imagine. (1 Peter 5:8) There is no one on earth as powerful in evil as Satan.

*A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great,
And armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not His equal.*

.....

If we had to depend on our own strength, we would be losing our battle against Satan. (Psalm 54:4) Yes, we would lose for certain ... that is, if we didn't have just the right man on our side, the man God chose to protect us. Do you ask who that "right man" is? It is Christ Jesus! (Ephesians 2:1-10) His name is *Lord*

Sabaoth, which means He is Lord of the Hosts of Heaven, Commander of the angel armies! Christ is the same forever, and *He will win* the battle against Satan.

***Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right man on our side,
The man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He,
Lord Sabaoth His name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.***

.....

This world is full of Satan's demons. But even though this world threatens to ruin us, we will not be afraid, because God has determined that He will use *us* to fight the war against Satan. So what about Satan, the grim Prince of Darkness? We are not afraid of him! We can endure Satan's anger and hatred, because his doom is certain: one little word from God will be the end of him. (Revelation 20:10, Matthew 25:41)

***And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo, his doom is sure;
One little word shall fell him.***

.....

Christ is the living Word of God! He is far greater than any of the “powerful” people on earth. He is *alive*, without any help from mankind. (John 1:1-5) The Holy Spirit and the gifts of God have come to us because of Christ, who sided with us in the battle against Satan. (John 15:26) Hold on to this world loosely—don’t cling too tightly to your things, or even your family, and don’t even worry about your earthly life: people may kill your body, but your soul and God’s truth will still live on. His kingdom will never end!

***That Word above all earthly pow’rs,
No thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours
Through Him who with us sideth.
Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also;
The body they may kill:
God’s truth abideth still;
His kingdom is forever.***

ALL HAIL THE POWER OF JESUS' NAME

Lyrics by **EDWARD PERRONET**, 1779–80,
and **JOHN RIPPON** (see page 326), 1787

Set to the tunes *Coronation—Miles Lane—Diadem (Ellor)—Diadem (Proulx)—
Diadem (Vail)—Let Us Crown Him—Laud—Diademata—Buckley—Ladywell—
University—Baltzell—Elevation—Cleburne—Green Street—New Agatite—and more*

Let everyone on earth and in Heaven sing praises together about Jesus' powerful name! Let the angels in Heaven fall on their faces before His throne to honor Him. Bring out the royal crown, and crown Christ our "Lord of All!"

***All hail the pow'r of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall:
Bring forth the royal diadem,
To crown Him Lord of All.***

.....

Let the noble seraphim angels tune up their harps (Isaiah 6:1-3) and get ready to sing Christ's praises. Let them fall down in honor before Him, for Christ is the Master Conductor of all Heaven's choirs. Let the angels crown Christ as our "Lord of All!"

***Let high-born seraphs tune the lyre,
And, as they tune it, fall
Before His face who tunes their choir,
And crown Him Lord of All.***

.....

You bright stars that beautify the early morning sky, crown Him as your King! Christ is the one who secured the earth where it floats in space beside you. (Job 38:4, John 1:2-3) Praise Christ, for all His people's strength comes from Him only (Psalm 68:35), and crown Christ "Lord of All!"

***Crown Him, ye morning stars of light,
He fix'd this floating ball;
Now hail the strength of Israel's might,
And crown Him Lord of All***

.....

Crown Christ, you martyrs, all you who have been killed for the sake of God's name, who wait at God's altar in Heaven. (Revelation 6:9-10) Praise Christ, who is the descendant of Jesse, the son of kings (Isaiah 11:1-3), and crown Him "Lord of All!"

***Crown Him, ye martyrs of your God,
Who from His altar call,
Extol the stem of Jesse's rod,
And crown Him Lord of All.***

.....

You children of Israel, God's chosen people—you whom Christ bought back and saved from the punishment of the Fall (Genesis 3:15)—praise Christ who saved you with His grace, and crown Him "Lord of All!"

***Ye seed of Israel's chosen race,
Ye ransom'd of the fall,
Hail Him who saves you by His grace,
And crown Him Lord of All.***

.....

You descendants of David, children of Israel, praise Christ! Yes, praise Him, for even the great King David called Him “my Lord.” (Psalm 110:1, Matthew 22:41-45) Jesus Christ is God who came down from Heaven and became a man: the God-man. So crown Him “Lord of All!”

***Hail Him, ye heirs of David's line,
Whom David Lord did call;
The God incarnate, Man divine,
And crown Him Lord of All.***

.....

All you sinners who love Jesus, who remember the bitter death that He suffered in order to save you, go and thank Him! Give all your treasures and honor to Him. Lay them down at His feet as gift to your King, to thank Him for dying to save you. (Revelation 4:9-11) And crown Him “Lord of All!”

***Sinners! whose love can ne'er forget,
The wormwood and the gall,
Go—spread your trophies at His feet,
And crown Him Lord of All.***

.....

Whether you're a baby, a grown-up, or a grandfather, that does not matter—if you understand that you are a slave to sin unless Christ rescues you, then rejoice! Christ is your Savior, too! So join in with the joyful song in Heaven, and crown Him “Lord of All.”

***Babes, men, and sires who know His love,
Who feel your sin and thrall,
Now joy with all the hosts above
And crown Him Lord of All.***

.....

O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL

Lyrics from Latin antiphons (short chants) of the 12th century,
made into a Latin hymn in 1710

Translated by **JOHN MASON NEALE** (see page 344) in 1851

Set to the tunes *Veni Immanuel* (plainsong chant)—*Veni Immanuel* (Goudon)—*St. Petersburg*—*Benison*—*Careys*—*Lux Prima*—*The First Noel*—*Spires*—and more

NOTE: This hymn is written as if it is being sung by the Israelites while they waited centuries for God to send the Messiah He had promised them. Now, that Messiah has already come. We sing “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” during Advent to remember how God’s people longed for Jesus to come, and to rejoice that we don’t have to wait!

.....

Oh come, please come, Emmanuel, our promised Messiah! Your name means “God with us,” and oh, how we long for God to be with us, to set us free from our slavery to sin. (Isaiah 7:14-15, Matthew 1:20-23) Emmanuel, we grieve because our sin keeps us separate from you. (Psalm 5:4) We cannot save ourselves... we will have to suffer this exile away from God until our Savior, the Son of God, appears on earth. (Romans 5:8-12) But Israel, rejoice! Be joyful and remember your hope, children of God: Emmanuel, our God with us, *will come*. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

***O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
(Refrain)
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.***

.....

Please come to us, Emmanuel! You are the living Wisdom of God, and you use your wisdom and mighty hand to control everything that happens. (1 Corinthians 1:30-31, 1 Corinthians 1:22-24) Come and teach us your wisdom, and show us how to live wisely here on earth. Dear Israel, rejoice! Be joyful and remember your hope, children of God: Emmanuel, our God with us, *will come*. (Micah 5:2)

***O come, thou Wisdom from on high,
Who orders all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And teach us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.***

.....

Oh, please come, Emmanuel, descendant of Jesse! (Isaiah 11:1-10) Set your dear children free from their slavery to Satan. Save your people from falling into the deep pit of Hell because of their sins! Give us victory over death, so that we will not be forever separated from God after we die—for if you do, we will have no more reason to fear the grave. (Isaiah 25:8) Oh Israel, rejoice! Be joyful and remember your hope, children of God: Emmanuel, our God with us, will come. (Jeremiah 31:31-31, Hebrews 8:10-11, Luke 22:20)

***O come, thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of Hell thy people save,
And give them vict'ry o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.***

.....

Please come to us, Mighty Lord, highest ruler of all Creation! (Psalm 2, Deuteronomy 10:14) Long ago, you gathered the tribes of Israel at Mount Sinai and taught us your law. You are too glorious for our human eyes to see, so

you hid yourself in thunder and clouds that day. Yet even then, your voice, your power, and your majesty terrified us so much that we fell on our faces in awe. (Exodus 19-20) But Israel, rejoice! Be joyful and remember your hope, children of God: Emmanuel, God who will live with us, *will come*. (Matthew 1:23)

***O come, O come, thou Lord of might,
Who to thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.***

.....

Please come to us, Emmanuel! Your coming will be like the sunrise, suddenly spilling its light on us when we had been sitting in darkness for so long. You will set us free from that darkness of sin. Cheer our sad hearts by coming to us, Messiah, Dawn of Heaven! Let your light chase away sin's clouds, which have hidden God from our eyes. We are like dead people, wandering in our sin until you come. Fill us with the light and life of Heaven, and send death and sin's shadows running! Oh Israel, rejoice. Be joyful and remember your hope, children of God: Emmanuel, our God with us, *will come*. (Jeremiah 32:39-41, Hebrews 9:15)

***O come, thou Dayspring from on high,
And cheer us by thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.***

.....

Come to us, Emmanuel! You will be called the Key of David, for you will be a Heavenly King descended from David, and you will hold the key that opens and shuts the doors of Heaven. (Revelation 1:17-18, 3:7) Emmanuel, open

wide Heaven's doors for us, so that we may come home to you! If we have to rely on our own goodness to get us to Heaven, we are not safe at all, for we cannot keep ourselves from falling into sin. Open the road to Heaven, and keep us safely on it! (2 Timothy 4:18, Philippians 1:6) Lock the gates that lead to sin and death in Hell, so that our sin cannot drag us there again. Israel, rejoice! Be joyful and remember your hope, children of God: Emmanuel, our God with us, *will come*. (Isaiah 53)

***O come, thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.***

.....

Come to us, our long-awaited Messiah! Every nation who fears God knows that He has promised to send you, and we long for you to come, Emmanuel. When you come, you will have fulfilled our greatest desire! (Haggai 2:7) Come and unite our hearts, so that we will no longer bicker and be divided. (1 Corinthians 1:10, John 10:14-16) You will be our Prince of Peace (Micah 5:4-5, Isaiah 9:6), who gives us peace with God and peace with each other. Dear Israel, rejoice! Be joyful and remember your hope, children of God: Emmanuel, our God with us, *will come*.

***O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of humankind;
O bid our sad divisions cease,
And be for us our King of Peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.***

O GOD OF EARTH AND ALTAR

Lyrics by **GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON** (see page 290), 1906

Set to the tunes *King's Lynn—Llangloffan—Lancashire—Gilling—Willsbridge*

Oh God, Maker of this earth, and the God whom we worship (Exodus 20:24), bend down close to us and hear our cry for help! Our earthly leaders are weak. (1 Samuel 15:10-11) Our people wander away from your truth (Jeremiah 14:10), and they are walking dead men because they do not have your life in them. Our precious money and possessions are stacking up around us, and these earthly things we have loved are building our tomb! Our beloved “stuff” will be the death of us, because it has distracted us from you, God. (Luke 18:24, Psalm 39:6, Jeremiah 15:13) God, your children fight with each other, and now we are divided from our brothers and sisters in Christ. (1 Corinthians 6:7) We are full of thunder and good fighting spirit, but we use it the wrong way. God, don't take away that thunder from us, because it is from you—but God, teach us to use it *rightly* (2 Corinthians 13:10), and take away the pride in our hearts that divides us! (1 Peter 5:5)

***O God of earth and altar,
Bow down and hear our cry,
Our earthly rulers falter,
Our people drift and die;
The walls of gold entomb us,
The swords of scorn divide,
Take not thy thunder from us,
But take away our pride.***

.....

Oh God, please save us from acting based on our fears. (2 Timothy 1:7, Romans 8:14-15) Save us from believing the lies that we hear and read. (Isaiah 10:1, John 8:44) Never let us comfort ourselves with the lie that “we’re not *really* bad people” (Proverbs 30:20)—that is the lie that evil men tell themselves, so they can keep on sinning! We will not be forgiven if we do not confess our sin to you. (1 John 1:8-9) Save us from selling our honor by giving in to people’s threats when we should have stood strong (Acts 4:29-30), and save us from distorting this fighting spirit that you’ve given us by using it to hurt our fellow men. (1 Thessalonians 5:11) Save us from getting lazy and sluggish, or else we won’t see the dangers around us. (Matthew 24:42, Mark 14:38) Above all, save us from being forever separated from you in Hell, good Lord! (Revelation 20:13-15)

***From all that terror teaches,
From lies of tongue and pen,
From all the easy speeches
That comfort cruel men,
From sale and profanation
Of honour and the sword,
From sleep and from damnation,
Deliver us, good Lord!***

.....

Lord, call all kinds of people: princes, priests, and even slaves, and tie all our lives together so that together we will be your one people. (Acts 10:34-35) Punish us when we sin against you (Proverbs 3:11-12), and save us all from our sins by washing us clean in Christ’s blood. (Revelation 7:13-17) Make us one united people, full of righteous anger against evil, and victorious over sin with Christ. When you make us yours, we will burn with faith, free from our sins, and we will be like a sword in your hand, our God!

***Tie in a living tether
The prince and priest and thrall,
Bind all our lives together,***

*Smite us and save us all;
In ire and exultation
Aflame with faith, and free,
Lift up a living nation,
A single sword to thee.*



GEORGE MATHESON

1842–1906

George Matheson was born in Glasgow, Scotland on March 27, 1842, the firstborn of eight children. He had very poor eyesight as a boy, but that did not stop him from going to Glasgow University when he was 15 years old. He graduated with a master's degree in 1862—only one year after earning his bachelor's degree! But study had worsened his bad eyesight, and by the time he was 20 he could only see shadows and outlines. Nevertheless, George had a reputation for being joyful, high-spirited, and not easily discouraged.

After college he became an assistant minister in Sandyford for a short time, before he was made the pastor of a bigger congregation in Innellan, Scotland in 1868. During this time his eldest sister was his closest helper. She guided him around, wrote his sermon notes, and helped him with his pastoral work. George's 18 years of preaching at Innellan began to make him famous. People now traveled from all over Scotland to hear him—but many of the people who heard him never realized that he was almost completely blind. When he preached, George acted as if he was frequently glancing at his sermon notes... but actually, he had memorized his entire sermon and large passages of Scripture.

Late at night in Innellan on June 6, 1882, 40-year-old George was hit with a sudden attack of depression. He never told what the reason for his sadness was, but that night he sat down and poured out what is probably his most

famous hymn: “O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go.” This hymn was peculiar to George. He said about it, “I had the impression of having it dictated to me by some inward voice rather than of working it out myself. I am quite sure that the whole work was completed in five minutes, and equally sure that it never received at my hands any retouching or correction. I have no natural gift of rhythm...this came like a dayspring from on high.”

In 1885, Queen Victoria invited George to come preach for her at Balmoral, her home in Scotland. She loved his sermon so much that she asked for it to be published. George also published a single book of hymns, and wrote several prose books—first with the help of his sister or a secretary, then by himself with braille and a typewriter.

In 1886 he moved to pastor St. Bernard’s Church in Edinburgh. Thirteen years later, at age 64, George Matheson died of a stroke on August 28, 1906.

.....

Make Me a Captive, Lord (page 168)

O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go (page 192)



AUGUSTUS MONTAGUE TOPLADY

1740-1778

On November 4, 1740, a boy named Augustus Montague Toplady was born in Farnham, an incredibly old town in Surrey, England. He never got to meet his father, Major Richard Toplady, who was away with the British Army and died in 1741. When Augustus was a boy his wise mother sent him to Westminster School in London—the same school where the hymnwriters John Dryden, Charles Wesley, and William Cowper had graduated.

By and by, the Toplady family moved to Ireland, and that is where 16-year-old Augustus found himself sitting with a crowd one evening, in a barn, to hear preacher James Morris give a sermon on Ephesians 6:13. Augustus, who had recently become a student of Trinity College, Dublin, met Christ that night.

Augustus graduated from Trinity College in 1760, and just two years later he became a minister in the Church of England. About a year after being ordained as a minister, he was walking through the Burrington Combe gorge in the Mendip Hills of England when a storm suddenly blew up. Augustus quickly hid in a crack in the massive limestone walls of the gorge for safety. While he sat there, he pondered on the way that crack in the cliff was protecting his body in the same way Jesus protected his soul ... and by the time the storm passed,

Augustus had the stirrings of an idea for a hymn that would begin, “*Rock of Ages, cleft for me / Let me hide myself in thee.*”

Some said that Augustus was bad-tempered, and his constant ministry work wore out his health. But till the end of his life, he remained a faithful servant of God who depended only on Christ’s perfection and God’s mercy to save him, not his own goodness—“A debtor to mercy alone,” as he put it. Augustus Toplady died at age 38 on August 11, 1778, saying, “I enjoy Heaven already in my soul. My prayers are all converted into praises.”

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A Debtor to Mercy Alone (page 16)

The Dying Believer (page 234)

Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace (page 93)

Hail, Thou Once-Despised Jesus! (page 103)

Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me (page 218)

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