

22nd September 2020

Faith

**“Bid, then, the tender light of faith to shine
By which alone the mortal heart is led
Unto the thinking of the thought divine.”**

George Santayana, Sonnets and other verses

Horatio Spafford was a successful mid-19th century Chicago lawyer. His son died aged four, and Spafford was then ruined financially by the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 and the economic collapse two years later. In 1873, he planned a trip to Europe with his family, but was delayed by business and his wife and daughters went without him. Their ship was struck by another vessel in mid-Atlantic and all four of his daughters were drowned. Shortly afterwards, travelling to be reunited with his wife, Spafford was inspired to write a hymn as a statement of faith as his ship passed near the spot where his daughters had been lost: *It is well with my soul*.

Set to music by Philp Bliss and published in 1876 by Bliss and Ira Sankey (of the “Moody & Sankey” partnership) Spafford’s hymn is a remarkable example of Santayana’s “tender light of faith”.

In 2011, following flooding in Queensland, Australia, a group, *Hillsong Live*, recorded a version of Spafford’s hymn, the proceeds going to the relief effort. It reached No 1 in the Australian music sales charts.

A hymn born in tragedy, offering hope a century and a half later, is an inspiring affirmation of faith. These verses of Horatio Spafford’s hymn will speak for themselves (including the striking repeats in the opening line of the refrain). So I’ll simply let them be our Prayer for Today.

*When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll,
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to know,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

*It is well (it is well), with my soul (with my soul),
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

*And Lord haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll,
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
A song in the night, oh my soul!*

*It is well (it is well), with my soul (with my soul),
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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