

## Hymn Stories: Number 2.

In document 'Number 1' we considered two very popular hymns, 'What a friend we have in Jesus' and 'How great Thou art'.

In this document, we will delve a little into the background to the writing of two other fairly well-known hymns.

The title of our first hymn is 'It is well with my soul',<sup>1</sup> which was written in 1873 by Horatio Gates Spafford.

Briefly the story is as follows.

Horatio Spafford was born in 1828 in New York.<sup>2</sup>

As well as being a very successful lawyer and businessman,<sup>3</sup> Mr Spafford was a devout Christian, and he ran a large Bible class in a Presbyterian church of Chicago. It was in his Bible class that he first met a beautiful young Norwegian girl, Anna Larssen,<sup>4</sup> who he later married.<sup>5</sup>



**Horatio**



**Anna**

Their early married life was spent in a large gabled cottage on the north side of Chicago.<sup>6</sup> For the next ten years, life was very pleasant for them, and by 1871 they had added a son and four lovely daughters to their home.



**Horatio Junior**



**Annie**



**Maggie**



**Bessie**



**Tanetta**

Mr Spafford was a close friend (and generous supporter) of the American evangelist D. L. Moody.



Mr Moody once told of the time the two older girls, Annie and Maggie, 'expressed their wish to join the church. This was an unusual request for such young children, and Mr. Moody thought them too young to understand. So he took them aside and separately questioned them concerning the dogmas of the church and their obligations as members of the Christian community. Then he led them to the minister. "These children know more than I do", Mr. Moody said'.<sup>7</sup>

But in short succession Horatio and Anna Spafford met with three great tragedies. First, sometime early in that year their little boy, named Horatio after both his father and grandfather, died.

And then, in the October of that same year, Mr Spafford's material wealth was consumed in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871.



Having invested heavily in land and property in the downtown area of expanding Chicago,<sup>8</sup> he lost everything overnight. But ...

### **the worst was yet to come!**

Two years later, Anna's doctor advised Horatio, for the benefit of Anna's health, 'to take the entire family on a trip to Europe'.<sup>9</sup>

Reservations were made on a large French liner, the Ville du Havre.



But 'just before they left Chicago', critical business matters compelled Mr Spafford to delay his own passage, and so Anna sailed with their four daughters, eleven-year-old Annie, nine-year-old Maggie, five-year-old Bessie, and two-year-old Tanetta, assured that he would follow them within days.<sup>10</sup>

It is not difficult to trace God's hand behind these circumstances. For, had Mr Spafford been on the liner, he would likely have drowned along with the majority of the passengers.

The liner sailed on 15 November 1873. But in the early hours of 22 November (just one week later), the ship collided with an iron sailing vessel in mid-Atlantic ocean, and sank in just twelve minutes.<sup>11</sup>



Almost three-quarters of the passengers and crew died.<sup>12</sup> But, remarkably, Anna Spafford was one of the few passengers who survived. This was an amazing story in itself; 'she had been rolled under and down, and as she rose unconscious to the surface a plank floated under her, saving her life'.<sup>13</sup>

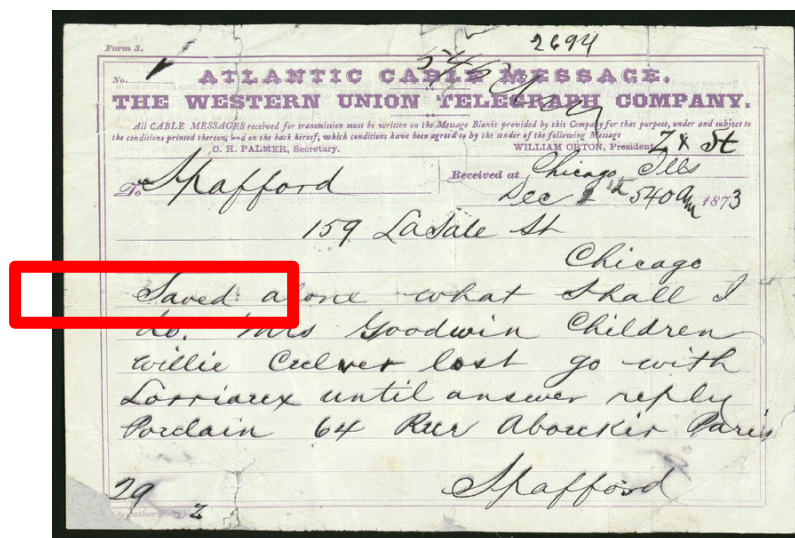
A daughter of Horatio and Anna (Bertha, born several years after the death of their four earlier daughters) recorded that: 'Aboard the Ville du Havre, just before sailing time, for no reason he could ever determine, Father went to the purser and asked to have the two cabins that Mother ... and the four children were to occupy changed to two others more toward the bow of the ship. He said afterward that he fought against the conviction that he must change them, not wishing to be troublesome, and also because he had no real complaint to make. He had chosen them himself, carefully, weeks before.

'But the feeling was so strong that he could not throw it off, and at almost the last minute he changed the rooms. ...The Ville du Havre had been struck on the starboard athwart the mainmast. The staterooms Father had insisted on changing were the first to catch the crushing blow of the iron ship, and their unfortunate occupants were the first on the Ville du Havre to die'.<sup>14</sup>

Had Mr Spafford not secured the change of cabins, Anna would have been in one of the crushed cabins.

But, tragically, unlike their mother, the four girls drowned.

Along with other survivors, Anna was brought on board a 'stout little sailing vessel'<sup>15</sup> to my home city<sup>16</sup> in South Wales, UK. And it was from there that she cabled a heart-rending telegraph message to her husband.<sup>17</sup> The first two words said it all ... 'Saved alone'.



Bertha later recorded: 'The cable arrived ... All that night, with Major Whittle and another devoted friend beside him, Father walked the floor in anguish. Major Whittle said that toward morning Father turned to him. "I am glad to trust the Lord when it will cost me something", he said. He cabled Mother that ... he would join her as soon as he could cross the Atlantic'.<sup>18</sup>

Mr Spafford left on the next available ship.

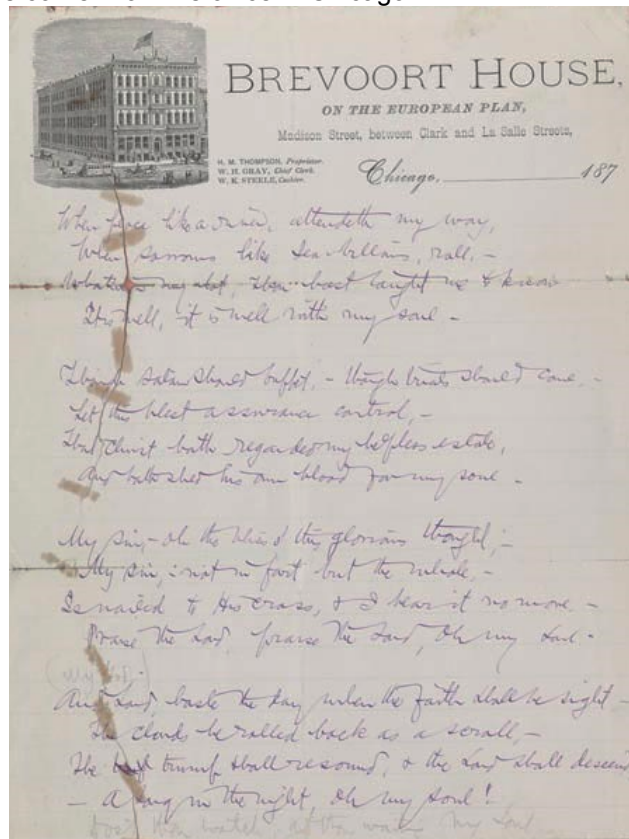
Bertha records that, midway across the ocean, "the captain called Father into his private cabin. "A careful reckoning has been made", he told (him), "and I believe we are now passing the place where the Ville du Havre was wrecked".<sup>19</sup>

A few days later, Mr Spafford wrote to Anna's half-sister, 'On Thursday last we passed over the spot where she went down, in mid-ocean, the water three miles deep. But I do not think of our dear ones *there*. They are safe, folded, the dear lambs, and there, before very long, shall we be too. In the meantime, thanks to God, we have an opportunity to serve and praise Him for His love and mercy to us and ours. I will praise Him while I have my being'.<sup>20</sup>

God, give me just a few ounces of this man's faith and courage!

'On the high seas', Bertha added, '**near the place where his children perished, he wrote the hymn**<sup>21</sup> that was to give comfort to so many'.<sup>22</sup>

The original four verses of that hymn were written on the front of a sheet of paper which he had been given in a hotel just around the corner from his office in Chicago.<sup>23</sup>



These are the words which Mr Spafford wrote on that sheet of paper:<sup>24</sup>

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.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,  
Let this blest assurance control,  
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,  
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought—  
My sin, not in part but the whole,  
Is nailed to His cross, and I bear it no more,  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O 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,<sup>25</sup> oh my soul.

In the front of the Bible which Anna had given him on the Christmas before the disaster which robbed them of their four daughters, he later wrote the words of John 13 verse 7, 'Jesus answered and said unto him, *What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter*'.<sup>26</sup>

The loss of their four precious daughters was not to be the last tragedy which Horatio and Anna Spafford were to suffer. Anna later gave birth to three more children, but the first of these (born almost three years to the day after the sinking of the Ville du Havre, and their only living son, named, as their earlier son, after his father) died of scarlet fever before he reached the age of four.

The young lad's full name was Horatio Goertner Spafford; he was born on 16 November 1876 and died on 11 February 1880. Bertha recorded, 'Mother never spoke of little Horatio's death. It was a blow that time never softened. She could not go to the cemetery'.<sup>27</sup>

'Among my treasures', Bertha added, 'is a little cardboard box found in Father's desk after his death in Jerusalem. In it are some faded flowers bound with white ribbon and the words: "Flowers from little Horatio's funeral". He brought this with him to Jerusalem when so little was taken. No one knew how deep was the grief he and Mother shared'.<sup>28</sup>

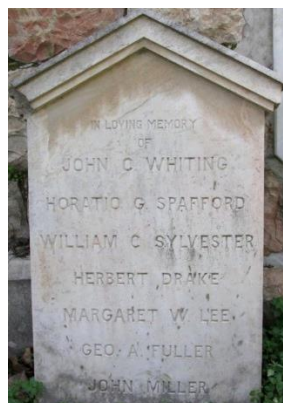
In August of the following year, Mr and Mrs Spafford emigrated to Jerusalem.<sup>29</sup> There, in spite of much opposition and many malicious lies told against them,<sup>30</sup> they did a tremendous work, establishing a community of believers which became known for its generous hospitality, visiting the sick, and providing help and shelter for the poor and needy – without regard to race, religion or nationality.<sup>31</sup>



**'The American Colony'**

Our story ends when Horatio Spafford died of malaria on 16 October 1888, just a few days short of 60 years of age.

Pending the resurrection, Mr Spafford's remains lie now in a shared grave. Toward the end of the 19th century, members of the American Colony learned that earlier burials had been removed and the remains placed in a large pit. Permission was granted for the bones to be gathered, and a small plot was granted for the burial of the American Colony members. The gravestone identifies seven members of the American Colony whose remains were recovered, including those of Horatio Gates Spafford.<sup>32</sup>



Horatio's widow, Anna, outlived him by almost 35 years, active in the Lord's service to the end, and going to be with Him on 17 April 1923.<sup>33</sup>



There in brief is a sketch of the life of the remarkable man who God used to bless us with the words of the hymn, 'It is well with my soul'. I would like to think that, if you *know* more now about the background to the hymn than you did in the past, you will *sing* it in the future with a greater measure of feeling than you have in the past.

Now, our second hymn. This hymn:

- (i) was sung by Nurse Edith Cavell the night before she was shot for helping British soldiers to escape from German-occupied Belgium;
- (ii) according to survivors, was played by the band on the Titanic as the ship was sinking;<sup>34</sup>
- (iii) was played at the weddings of both George VI and his daughter, our present Queen (Elizabeth II);
- (iv) was played at Ground Zero by a Salvation Army band during the commemoration of the September 11 attacks in 2001; and
- (v) has been sung in part before the kick-off at FA cup finals since 1927.<sup>35</sup>

The title of that hymn is, of course, 'Abide with me'.<sup>36</sup>

It was written by Henry Francis Lyte,<sup>37</sup> an Anglican curate<sup>38</sup> in the fishing town of Brixham in South Devon, England.



**Henry Francis Lyte**  
1793-1847

Mr Lyte took the key words of his hymn from the narrative which forms the central section of Luke 24:

Behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.

And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" ...

Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, "**Abide with us**, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent".

And He went in to stay ('to abide') with them. Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.<sup>39</sup>

In October 2012, my wife Linda and I paid a visit to Brixham.

One of the local Christians (a friend from many years past<sup>40</sup>) kindly arranged for us to visit Henry Lyte's church ('All Saints' in Lower Brixham), and for me to see Mr Lyte's former home, 'Berry Head House', now a hotel.



**All Saints Church, Brixham**



**Berry Head House, Brixham**

Mr Lyte was always frail in health, suffering from asthma, bronchitis and TB. Born in Scotland in June 1793, he was orphaned early in life. But, despite the handicap of poverty, he succeeded at college, on three occasions winning prizes with his poems.<sup>41</sup>

Mr Lyte's original ambition had been to become a physician, but, during his college days, he changed course and decided to enter fulltime into the Church of England.

The death of a young friend, a fellow clergyman (Abraham Swanne), brought about a profound change in his spiritual life. Called to the bedside of his friend to give him consolation, he had his eyes opened by the dying man to the fact that they both had been 'mistaken' in the past. Mr Lyte later wrote of his friend: 'He died, I rejoice to say, happy under the belief that, though he had deeply erred, there was One whose death and sufferings would atone for his delinquencies'.

Concerning the change which he himself experienced at the time, he added: 'I was greatly affected by the whole matter, and brought to look at life and its issue with a different eye than before; and I began to study my Bible and preach in another manner than I had previously done'.<sup>42</sup>

For almost twenty-five years<sup>43</sup> after this incident, Henry Lyte laboured tirelessly among the humble fisherfolk and sailors of the parish of Lower Brixham.



### **Brixham**

His daughter Anna reported that, when in comparatively good health, 'he used often playfully' to quote the words, 'It was better to *wear* out than to *rust* out'.<sup>44</sup>

He was a friend of Samuel Wilberforce (the third son of the famous William Wilberforce), and actively opposed slavery, organising a petition to Parliament in 1833 which requested that slavery be abolished in Great Britain.<sup>45</sup>

His constant toil, coupled with his illness, overtaxed his physical powers. On one occasion, 'the celebrated Dr. Chambers told him that "unless he slackened his sails and cast anchor for a while, his voyage of life would soon be over"'.<sup>46</sup>

It was in the autumn of 1847, when only 54, that with great effort he entered his familiar pulpit on 4 September 1847 to preach what proved to be his last sermon.<sup>47</sup>



### **The pulpit from which Mr Lyte preached**

Here are a few short extracts from that last sermon:

There is one great truth, that rises pre-eminent above all others; one mighty fact that should more than all besides fill the Christian's eye and heart—and that is, the death and sacrifice of his Saviour. There is no fact beside so touching, so eloquent, so persuasive as this.

None that speaks so awfully of our condition ... that needed so stupendous a sacrifice! None that so assures us of the sufficiency of the remedy; for what can be wanting where God spared not His own Son for our ransom? ... I stand up here ... to impress it upon you, and induce you to prepare for that solemn hour, which must come to all, by a timely acquaintance with, appreciation of, dependence on, the death of Christ.<sup>48</sup>

That week, he left for Italy to regain his health. He never reached there. He died in Nice, France on 20 November 1847, when his diseased lungs finally gave out.

Another English clergyman, a Rev. Manning who happened to be staying in the same hotel in Nice, attended him during his final hours. Henry Lyte's last words were 'Peace! Joy!'<sup>49</sup>

During his lifetime, Henry Lyte wrote several hundred poems and hymns,<sup>50</sup> including such classic hymns as, 'Jesus, I my cross have taken', and 'Praise, my soul, the King of heaven'.



His daughter Anna later recorded that it was on the evening when he preached his last sermon (just eleven weeks before his homecall) that he 'placed in the hands of a near and dear relative' a *near-final version* of 'Abide with me'.<sup>51</sup>

This was the version (written by Mr Lyte's own hand) which Linda and I saw (and photographed) in his church back in 2012.

A FACSIMILE OF THE HYMN  
'ABIDE WITH ME! FAST FALLS THE  
EVENTIDE'  
IN THE AUTHOR'S HANDWRITING

*Abide with me for it's twilight  
Evening and the day is far spent,  
Abide with me! For 'tho' the darkness  
The darkness thickens, Lord, with me abide!  
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!*  
*Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;  
Earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away;  
Change and decay in all around I see—  
O Thou who changest not, abide with me!*  
*Not a brief glance I beg, a passing word;  
But as Thou dwell'st with Thy disciples, Lord,  
Familiar, condescending, patient, free,  
Come, not to sojourn, but abide with me!*

*Come not in terrors, as the King of kings;  
But kind and good, with healing in Thy wings;  
Tears for all woes, a heart for every plea,  
Come, Friend of sinners, and thus abide with me!*  
*Thou on my head in early youth didst smile,  
And though rebellious and perverse meanwhile,  
Thou hast not left me, oft as I left Thee,  
On to the close, O Lord, abide with me!*  
*I need Thy presence every passing hour,  
What but Thy grace can foil the Tempter's power?  
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?  
Thou art the close, O Lord, abide with me!*  
*Open us for with thee at hand to bless:  
We have no might, and thou art better than we,  
Where is better than where thou art, O Lord,  
I triumph still, O Lord, abide with me!*  
*Hold them all cross before my closing eyes,  
Speak through the gloom, and put out the  
Haven's morning haze, and with me, O Lord,  
In life's death, O Lord, abide with me!*  
A. C. Lyte

### The 'near-final' version of 'Abide with me'.

This 'near-final' version is distinguished by the expressions, 'The darkness *thickens*' and '*Speak through the gloom*', in contrast to the later (and better known), 'The darkness *deepens*' and '*Shine through the gloom*'.

Evidently, Mr Lyte then took his own manuscript away with him for further revision, sending it in its *final form* to his wife from France.<sup>52</sup>

Both versions of the hymn comprised eight verses in all, of which only five are familiar to most of us.<sup>53</sup>

In their *final form*, these are the full eight verses (with the three lesser-known verses shown in *italics*):<sup>54</sup>

Abide with me! Fast falls the eventide;  
The darkness deepens: Lord, with me abide!  
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;  
Earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away:  
Change and decay in all around I see:  
O Thou, who changest not, abide with me!

*Not a brief glance I beg, a passing word,  
But as Thou dwell'st with Thy disciples, Lord,  
Familiar, condescending, patient, free,  
Come, not to sojourn, but abide, with me!*

*Come not in terrors, as the King of kings;  
But kind and good, with healing in Thy wings:  
Tears for all woes, a heart for every plea.  
Come, Friend of sinners, and thus bid with me!*

*Thou on my head in early youth didst smile,  
And, though rebellious and perverse meanwhile,  
Thou hast not left me, oft as I left Thee.  
On to the close, O Lord, abide with me!*

I need Thy presence every passing hour.  
What but Thy grace can foil the Tempter's power?  
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?

Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me!

I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless;  
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.  
Where is death's sting? where, grave, thy victory?  
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

Hold then Thy cross before my closing eyes:  
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies:  
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee.  
In life and death, O Lord, abide with me!

*To be continued, God willing, next week.*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I think it likely that, with Mr Spafford's extensive knowledge of scripture, his choice of the words, '*It is well*', was suggested by those of the Shunammite woman following *the sudden and unexpected death* of her son, 2 Kings 4. 26.

<sup>2</sup> He was born in Troy, a city in the State of New York on 20 October 1828. The family had originated in Yorkshire, England. (Source: Bertha Spafford Vester, '*Our Jerusalem*', Kindle Locations 291-292. The whole book can be downloaded freely from <https://archive.org/details/ourjerusalem000091mbp/mode/2up>.)

<sup>3</sup> 'He was senior partner in the prominent and influential Chicago firm of Spafford, McDaid and Wilson, and was considered an authority on national as well as international law', *ibid.* Kindle Locations 90-91.

<sup>4</sup> 'He also found time to teach a Sunday-school class, and it was in this capacity, toward the end of Father's first year in Chicago, that he met the 15 year-old beautiful Norwegian girl Anna Larssen who was to become my mother', *ibid.* Kindle Locations 355-356, 439. (The family later changed their name to 'Lawson'.)

<sup>5</sup> 'They were married on September 5, 1861', *ibid.* Kindle Location 480. She was almost 14 years younger than he was; he was born on 20 October 1828, and she was born on 16 March 1842.

<sup>6</sup> 'At this time he and Mother were living in the suburb of Lake View, on the north side of Chicago, in a vine-covered gabled cottage surrounded by twelve acres of lawn', *ibid.* Kindle Locations 100-101.

<sup>7</sup> Source: *ibid.* Kindle Locations 601-605.

<sup>8</sup> Along Lake Michigan's shoreline.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted from *ibid.* Kindle Locations 722-724.

<sup>10</sup> 'Just before they left Chicago Father had an offer from a man who wanted to buy part of the land in which he had invested so disastrously before the Great Fire. He could not afford to forego such an important offer', *ibid.* Kindle Locations 735-738. 'Just before he bade his family farewell a telegram was handed Father, stating that the man who had been about to buy the Chicago property had suddenly died of heart failure', *ibid.* Kindle Locations 754-755.

<sup>11</sup> 'About two o'clock that morning, November 22, the Ville du Havre was carrying its sleeping passengers over a quiet sea when two terrific claps, like thunder, were followed by frightening screams ... a great iron sailing vessel ...had rammed theirs ... Only twelve minutes after the Ville du Havre was struck it sank', *ibid.* Kindle Locations 786-849.

<sup>12</sup> The Ville du Havre sailed with 313 passengers and crew on board, of whom 226 (72%) died. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS\\_Ville\\_du\\_Havre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Ville_du_Havre).

<sup>13</sup> Source: *ibid.* Kindle Locations 786-849.

<sup>14</sup> Source: *ibid.* Kindle Locations 750-754, and 815-817.

<sup>15</sup> 'Within the space of a few hours, three ships came together at a given point, and the arrival of that stout little sailing vessel, the Trimountain, commanded by Captain Urquhart, in time to rescue the survivors of the ship wrecked Ville du Havre ... was held to be then and must still be considered one of the miracles of the sea', *ibid.* Kindle Locations 956-957,

<sup>16</sup> Cardiff was not a city when Anna was there. It was not granted city status until 1905 (by King Edward VII).

<sup>17</sup> 'Nine days after the shipwreck, on December 1, 1873, the Trimountain reached Cardiff, Wales. Captain Urquhart was not expected to touch Wales, and by cutting the journey short for his sad passengers he ran the risk of forfeiting the insurance, and I believe he was censured for it. As soon as the survivors of the Ville du Havre were landed they were able to send dispatches', *ibid.* Kindle Locations 1025-1029.

<sup>18</sup> Source: *ibid.* Kindle Locations 1052-1057.

<sup>19</sup> '*On the way across the Atlantic the captain called Father into his private cabin. "A careful reckoning has been made," he told them, "and I believe we are now passing the place where the Ville du Havre was wrecked"*', Father wrote to Aunt Rachel [Anna's half-sister]: "On Thursday last we passed over the spot where she went down, in mid-ocean, the water three miles deep. But I do not think of our dear ones there. They are safe, folded, the dear lambs, and there, before very long, shall we be too. In the meantime, thanks to God, we have an opportunity to serve and praise Him for His love and mercy to us and ours. I will praise Him while I have my being. May we each one arise, leave all, and follow Him". To Father this was a passing through the "valley of the shadow of death", but his faith came through triumphant and strong. On the high seas, near the place where his children perished, he wrote the hymn that was to give comfort to so many', *ibid.* Kindle Locations 1118-1127.

<sup>20</sup> See note 18 above.

<sup>21</sup> Philip Bliss wrote the music for the hymn in 1876, giving the tune the title 'Ville du Havre'.

<sup>22</sup> See note 18 above.

<sup>23</sup> 'Old business cards place the law offices of 'H.G. Spafford, H.O. McDaid and John P. Wilson' just around the corner from the [Brevoort House, a Chicago] hotel, at 157 and 159 LaSalle St., Room 37 of the Republic Life Building. In those days, hotel lobbies were quite the public forum. True to the times, Spafford is said to have frequented Brevoort House. Those who knew him concluded that he must have had the stationery in his bags when he made his heart-breaking voyage to join Anna'. (Source: [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2006-12-10/travel/0612090162\\_1\\_american-colony-hotel-ville-du-havre-great-chicago-fire/2](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2006-12-10/travel/0612090162_1_american-colony-hotel-ville-du-havre-great-chicago-fire/2).)

<sup>24</sup> I have failed to locate any evidence that Mr Spafford ever wrote a verse which often appears in hymnbooks today. I refer to the verse:

But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,  
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;  
*Oh trump of the angel! Oh voice of the Lord!*  
Blessèd hope, blessèd rest of my soul!

It is difficult to believe that somebody as well versed in scripture as Horatio Spafford would have got *backwards* the apostle Paul's words, 'the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with *the voice of the archangel*, and with *the trump of God*', 1 Thess. 4. 16.

<sup>25</sup> In a book of Poems entitled, 'Waiting for the Morning' (which Mr Spafford had published in 1878, five years after the Ville du Havre tragedy), he included a poem entitled, 'A Song in the Night'. The first verse reads (page 30):

*There's darkness all round in my earthly affairs,—  
Wave following wave, tribulation and cares;  
My way is shut up on the left and the right;—  
And, yet, I've a mind for a song in the night!  
A song in the night,—a song in the night,—  
My heart, canst thou give Him a song in the night?*

Another of the poems ('As Silver is tried') includes the moving lines (page 12):

*Upon the sea, beneath whose midnight billows  
The brood we loved went down ...  
The faithful Lord the grace withholding never  
To say, Thy will be done!*

Interestingly, in the poem entitled 'It is well with my soul', although the first three verses remain unchanged from those which Mr Spafford had penned five years before (soon after the tragedy in 1873), he had revised the fourth and last verse to read (page 45):

And, Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,—  
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll,—  
The trump shall resound, and Thy kingdom shall come!  
"Even so,"—it is well with my soul!

<sup>26</sup> Source: <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/americancolony/amcolony-holyland.html#obj13>.

<sup>27</sup> Source: Bertha Spafford Vester, 'Our Jerusalem', Kindle Locations 1315-1317.

<sup>28</sup> Source: *ibid.* Kindle Locations 1322-1328. Bertha added, 'After Horatio's death Father wrote the hymn, "A Song in the Night"'.

<sup>29</sup> 'On August 17, 1881, the band of pilgrims left Chicago. Father wrote in his tiny pocket diary: "Started for Europe at 9:10 P.M. [for Jerusalem via Quebec]", *ibid.* Kindle Locations 1453-1455.

<sup>30</sup> Sadly, both Horatio and Anna Spafford were often badly and vindictively maligned. My researches indicate clearly that all the charges against them were totally false. I cite two examples:

(i) This is a quotation from pages 58-59 of Bertha Spafford Vester's, 'Our Jerusalem':

'For many years the stories continued to grow wilder on either side of the Atlantic ... Among the many absurd claims Father was accused of thinking himself the second Messiah. Subtlest of all accusations, because it wore a sham mantle of magnanimity, was that "poor Mr. and Mrs. Spafford have suffered so much they are unbalanced".

Some reports were vicious, others harmful, all untrue.

A story which appeared in the Chicago papers soon after our arrival in Jerusalem was that we went every afternoon to the Mount of Olives to wait for the Lord's arrival, and made a cup of tea so we would be the first to give Him refreshment. As always, there is a sliver of truth in this tall tale. One of our favourite walks was to the Mount of Olives. We took simple picnic spreads on these expeditions, and, since we quickly met many English people in Jerusalem, Mother soon learned to take along the proverbial tea basket without which no outing was complete for our British friends.

However, the story persisted through the years, and only a short time ago I met a lady in New York who, when she heard I had lived many years in Jerusalem, said: "You don't belong to that group of people, do you, who went every day to the Mount of Olives and prepared tea for Christ's second coming?" I told her that as far as I knew no such group ever existed. She retorted: "Oh, don't spoil a good story; I have often told it".

(ii) One website claims concerning Mr Spafford's home-call, 'His own wife never mourned for him ... and she even danced at his death!'

This is Bertha's account of what really happened that day, 'Mother, as she looked down on Father's unconscious and emaciated face, realized that she must face the work, future sorrows, and whatever was ahead of her alone. I stood beside her; I was conscious of her struggle. As she listened to the measured breathing that became more labored as time went on, and felt the declining strength of a pulse that was beating ever more irregularly, I could see she was being overwhelmed with anguish. But she must be worthy of this brave man, her life's partner ... She left the room and stood in the arbor, watching a waning moon rise red over the Mount of Olives. All was quiet ... she lifted her breaking heart to God; she quoted Scripture, not knowing chapter or verse, "I will dance before the Lord", she said ... In that phrase she expressed her determination not to give in to overwhelming sorrow ... It was the expression of her determination really to believe, "I am the resurrection, and the life", 'Our Jerusalem', page 154.

Sadly, this sort of thing can be multiplied time after time.

<sup>31</sup> 'The group settled in the old part of Jerusalem and started a work which later became known as the "American Colony". There they served the needy, helped the poor, cared for the sick and took in homeless children'; source: <https://thelatterdays.blogspot.co.uk/2012/10/it-is-well-with-my-soul.html>. In Jerusalem they adopted two boys on 9 July 1883. The one boy (Jacob Eliahu) is credited with discovering the so-called Siloam Inscription in Hezekiah's Tunnel. The fascinating story can be read at: Bertha Spafford Vester, *'Our Jerusalem'*, Kindle Locations 2163-2231.

<sup>32</sup> 'The American Colony had secured a place for burials on the south eastern slope of the traditional Mount Zion overlooking the Hinnom Valley ... Toward the end of the 19th century, when the members of the American Colony needed a grave site, they learned that earlier burials had been removed and the remains placed "temporarily" in a large pit. After much effort, permission was granted by various ruling authorities for the bones to be gathered, and a small plot was granted for the burial of the American Colony members. The small plot is immediately inside the gate to the [Protestant] cemetery [on Mount Zion]. The large marker identifies seven members of the American Colony whose remains were recovered: John C. Whiting; Horatio G. Spafford; William C. Sylvester; Herbert Drake; Margaret W. Lee; Geo. A. Fuller; John Miller'. (Source: Ferrell Jenkins at ... <https://ferrelljenkins.wordpress.com/2013/02/20/the-spafford-grave-in-the-protestant-cemetery/>).

<sup>33</sup> The notice of Anna's funeral can be seen at ... [https://www.loc.gov/resource/mamcol.022\\_3/?sp=328](https://www.loc.gov/resource/mamcol.022_3/?sp=328) (pages 194-195).

<sup>34</sup> 'Bateman pushed his sister-in-law into a lifeboat, and then returned to the band, calling on the musicians to play "Nearer My God to Thee". The hymn was taken up by passengers and crew who had been unable to find a place in one of the inadequate number of lifeboats. As the ship slipped under, the band changed to "Abide with me"'. Sources:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/brizzlebornandbred/2094682389/>;

[https://www.cai.org/bible-studies/abide-me](https://www.cai.org/bible-studies/abide-me;);

<https://ballynoehouse.ie/tag/abide-with-me/>.

Also see: 'Dr. Washington Dodge, from his lifeboat, reported hearing the band playing Lead, Kindly Light; a group of Titanic crewmen heard the band play *Abide With Me* and *Eternal Father, Strong To Save* as well as other hymns'. Source: <https://timmaltin.com/2019/04/26/titanic-band/>.

<sup>35</sup> See: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/3668058/The-story-behind-the-hymn.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Written in 1847.

<sup>37</sup> See, among many other sources: <https://www.hymnologyarchive.com/henry-francis-lyte>.

<sup>38</sup> Technically, Mr Lyte was a 'Perpetual Curate', a class of incumbent curate within the Church of England. 'Perpetual curates disappeared from view in 1868, after which they could legally call themselves vicars'; source [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perpetual\\_curate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perpetual_curate).

<sup>39</sup> Luke 24. 13-31 (New King James Version).

<sup>40</sup> Mr Alan Healey.

<sup>41</sup> Sources: <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/borders/02MemorialAndPoeticalWorksOfHFL.pdf> and ... <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/ryden/hymnstory.p4.c48.html>.

<sup>42</sup> '*The Remains of the Late Rev. Henry Francis Lyte, A.M., Incumbent of Lower Brixham, Devonshire*' was published in January 1850 (less than three years after Mr Lyte's homecall). The information given in the text, together with the quotation, can be found on pages xvi and xvii (in the 'Prefatory Memoir, written by his daughter Anna Maria Maxwell Hogg.').

<sup>43</sup> From 1823 to 1847; <http://www.stempublishing.com/hymns/biographies/lyte.html>.

<sup>44</sup> '*Remains*', page li. Note that Mr Lyte laid no claim to have 'coined the phrase' (as asserted by K. W. Osbeck in 'Amazing Grace', page 127). The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations (page 228) traces this exact statement back to Bishop Richard Cumberland. The actual source of the quotation comes from a discourse given by George Horne the Bishop of Norwich. The printed version of his discourse reads, 'When a friend told Bishop Cumberland, he would wear himself out by his incessant application; "It is better", replied the Bishop, "to wear out, than to rust out"'. See: George Horne, '*The Duty of Contending for the Faith: A Sermon Preached at the Primary Visitation of the most reverend John, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, in the Cathedral and Metropolitan Church, July 1, 1786*', footnote to page 24.

It should be noted that Mr Lyte was *not born* until 1 June 1793, seven years *after* Bishop Horne delivered his discourse, and no less than almost 75 years after Bishop Cumberland had died (9 October 1718. So much for the claim that Mr Lyte 'coined the phrase'!

<sup>45</sup> See: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Henry-Francis-Lyte-Brixhams-Priest/dp/0900771925>.

<sup>46</sup> 'Remains', page xlii.

<sup>47</sup> The text taken by Mr Lyte was 'For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come' (1 Cor. 11. 26). The complete sermon can be found on pages 281-292 of 'Remains'.

<sup>48</sup> 'Remains', pages 285-286.

<sup>49</sup> Source: <http://www.firstunitedmethodistdevilslake.org/clientimages/52448/no%20comparison.pdf>, page 4.

<sup>50</sup> He wrote almost 300 hymns; [http://www.hymntime.com/tch/bio/l/y/t/lyte\\_hf.htm](http://www.hymntime.com/tch/bio/l/y/t/lyte_hf.htm). Over 80 are listed by name in John Julian's 'Dictionary of Hymnology' (1907).

<sup>51</sup> 'Remains', page lii.

<sup>52</sup> The hymn went through several revisions at Mr Lyte's hand. 'It is not at all likely that the hymn was written that day: those who know most of Mr. Lyte are not quite sure when he began the hymn, and think that he probably did not give it its final form till he sent it home to Mrs. Lyte, with possibly some slight verbal alteration, from Avignon', Rev. John Applegate, 'The Poetical Works of the Rev. H. F. Lyte, M. A.', page 28.

A facsimile of the version which Henry Lyte passed on following his last sermon (in his own handwriting) appears at the front of 'The Poetical Works'. This version contains the expressions, 'The darkness *thickens*' and '*Speak* through the gloom'.

<sup>53</sup> The hymn is now sung to the tune 'Eventide', composed in only ten minutes by the organist William Monk. It was composed during what his widow recalled as 'a time of great sorrow. Hand in hand we were silently watching the glory of the setting sun (our daily habit) until the golden hue had faded... Then he took paper and pencilled the tune which has gone all over the world'. (Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/3668058/The-story-behind-the-hymn.html>).

<sup>54</sup> The final version (sent to Mrs Lyte) was included in 'Remains' (pages 119-121).

The printed version clearly shows the last line of the fourth stanza as, 'Come, Friend of sinners, and thus bide with me!' I suspect that, in the fourth stanza, Mr Lyte deliberately switched from 'abide' (as in all other verses) to 'bide' (two words now archaic with identical meaning – 'remain', 'stay') to preserve the structure of his poem; namely, to have ten syllables in every last line.

We should remember that Mr Lyte was no dunce. When at the prestigious Trinity College, Dublin, 'he was awarded the Chancellor's Prize for English Verse for three successive years. He was first among twenty four students in 1813 and in the same year he won a scholarship' (<http://taghmon.com/vol1/3lyte/3lyte.htm>).