

CALL TO WORSHIP

Harpeth Baptist Church

The Old Testament, an overview

Daniel

How to survive through change

Text: The Book of Daniel

Responsive reading: Psalm 150

Songs for 8:30 am:

335 Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim It

388 I Know Whom I Have Believed

O Lord, My Rock and My Redeemer

138 Learning to Lean

Songs for 11 am:

239 In Christ Alone

383 The Solid Rock

O Lord, My Rock and My Redeemer

392 Rock of Ages

This week's special music

[O Lord, My Rock and My Redeemer—click to listen](#)

Hymn History

Augustus Montague Toplady, the writer of "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me," was born in England in 1740 and died there from tuberculosis in 1778.

Toplady was a staunch Calvinist and notorious for his dislike of and feuds with John Wesley. Though he had converted to Methodism, his study persuaded him that the Calvinist perspective, rather than Arminian theology supported by Wesley, offered the best understanding of salvation.

Toplady was involved in several literary endeavors. He published *Psalms and Hymns for a Public and Private Worship* (1776) and served as editor of the *Gospel Magazine* from 1771-1776. In the *Dictionary of Hymnology*, John Julian cites the 1775 article "Life a Journey," in which Toplady first published the first stanza of "Rock of Ages." The following paragraph preceded the first stanza of the hymn: "Yes, if you fall, be humbled, but do not despair. Pray afresh to God, who is able to raise you up, and set you on your feet again. Look to the blood of the covenant; and say to the Lord from the depths of your heart . . ."

Rock of Ages

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
let me hide myself in thee;
let the water and the blood,
from thy wounded side which flowed,
be of sin the double cure,
save from wrath and make me pure.

The complete hymn appeared a year later in the *Gospel Magazine* as "A Living and Dying Prayer for the Holiest Believer in the World."

In this prayer, Toplady uses "Rock of Ages" as an endearing term for God. Christ's blood from his death as the forgiveness for our sins is the theme in stanza one. Stanza two focuses on the idea that we can never repay him for that sacrifice.

One of the paradoxes of this hymn is that Toplady may have borrowed the opening line from his theological nemesis, Charles Wesley. The image of the rock, common in hymnody and Scripture, was used by Wesley in one of his *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, published 30 years earlier. Though Wesley's hymn goes in a different direction, it begins, "Rock of Israel, cleft for me . . ."