"My Faith Looks Up to Thee"

By ROBERT D. KALIS

MR. PALMER, you may live many years and do many good things, but I think you will be best known to posterity as the author of My Faith Looks Up to Thee." These words spoken by Dr. Lowell Mason, the great Composer of Hymn tunes, proved to be remarkably accurate.

Several days earlier, Dr. Mason had met Ray Palmer on a Boston street. The musician asked young Palmer if perchance he had any hymns suitable for the new hymnal which he was compling. Palmer drew out a pocket notebook and showed Mason a poem which he had written two or three years before. The musician was attracted by it and requested a copy. They stepped into a doorway, and there the copy was made.

So impressed was Dr. Mason with the poem that he himself at once composed an original tune for it. This tune, to which the hymn is almost always sung, is known as Olivet. The words and tune fit each other like a hand and glove. The finished hymn first appeared in Spiritual Songs for Social Worship by Dr. Thomas Hasting and Dr. Lowell Mason (1833). So this hymn, regarded by many as the best American hymn, found its way into public use.

The author Ray Palmer (1808-1857) had a very interesting background and history. He was a descendant of William Palmer, who came to Plymouth in the ship Fortune in 1621 and also of John and Priscilla Alden

through their daughter, Elizabeth.

Shortly after his father, Judge Palmer of Rhode Island, sent him out on his own, when he was only thirteen, Ray under the ministry of Rev. Sereno Edwards Dwight, a grandson and the biographer of Jonathan Edwards, was soundly converted. The pastor urged the bright young lad to go on with his education. Accordingly he left his job in a dry goods store and enrolled at Phillips Andover Academy and later attended Yale University.

Just after graduating from Yale in 1830, he secured employment teaching in a fashionable school for young ladies in New York City. It was there in his room that My Faith Looks Up to Thee was written. It was his first and best hymn. He tells of

its origin in his own journal.

"It had no external occasion whatever. Having been accustomed from childhood, through an inherited propensity perhaps, to the occasional expression of what his heart felt, in the form of verse, it was in ac-, cordance with this habit, and in an hour when Christ, in the riches of His grace and love, was so vividly apprehended as to fill the soul with deep emotion, that the lines were composed. There was not the slightest thought of writing for another eye, least of all writing a hymn for Christian worship. Away from outward excitement, in the quiet of his chamber, and with a deep consciousness of his own needs, the writer transferred as faithfully as he could to paper what at the time was passing within him. Six stanzas were composed and imperfectly written, first on a loose sheet, and then accurately copied into a small morocco-covered book, which for such purposes the

My faith looks up to thee.
Then hamb of Calvary,
Javieur Divini.

Take all my guilt away.
De wholly thin.

They they sich grace impart
of the agt to my fainting heart.

They had inspire.

To those hast died for me.

O, may ing love to thee.

Pure, Joseph, of changeless he,

it living fire.

Fac-simile of Two Verses of "My Faith Looks Up To Thee" in the Author's Handwriting.



Ray Palmer

morning service came quite early one Lord's Day. To pass the the time he idly paged through the hymnal. His eyes fell upon the words,

"My faith looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary, Savior divine."

So powerfully did the words grip him that immediately he looked to the "Lamb of Calvary" and was saved. The young man called at the pastor's residence afterward to tell of his experience. To his great joy and surprise, he discovered that the pastor was the author of the hymn which was the means of his conversion.

After fifteen years as pastor in Albany, Dr. Palmer "retired" to Newark, New Jersey, where he continued to serve the Lord as a substitute pastor, editor, and translator of many hymns, particularly from Latin, among them, "Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts," which was Dr. Palmer's version of "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee." It was in Newark that he went to be with the Lord on March 29, 1837.

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author was accustomed to carry in his pocket.... It is well remembered that when writing the last line, 'A ransomed soul,' the thought that the whole work of redemption and salvation was involved in those words moved the writer to a degree of emotion that brought abundant tears."

Dr. Palmer was ordained into the Congregational clergy in 1835. He served as pastor in Bath, Maine, for fifteen years and then in Albany, New York. for an equal time.

During the latter pastorate an interesting event took place. A young man who frequently attended Dr. Palmer's Sunday