

# MY FAITH LOOKS UP TO THEE

*Ray Palmer, Lyrics, 1830; Tune: OLIVET, Lowell Mason, Music, 1832*

Ray Palmer (1808-1887) wrote these words while employed as a teacher at a private girls' school in New York. He had experienced a difficult year of illness and loneliness and was inspired to write this verse one night after meditating on a German poem that depicted a sinner kneeling before the cross of Christ. He later stated, "*The words for these stanzas were born out of my own soul with very little effort. I recall that I wrote the verses with tender emotion*" When writing the last line, "*O bear me safe above, a ransomed soul!*" he thought that the whole work of redemption and salvation was involved in those words "*brought me to a degree of emotion that brought abundant tears.*"

Palmer jotted the text into a notebook, which he shared two years later while visiting with the composer Dr. Lowell Mason in Boston. He read the hymn lyrics and felt the hymn was a prayer song that asks for forgiveness (st. 1), for purity of love (st. 2), for divine guidance (st. 3), and for safe homecoming into glory (st. 4). He was moved and was happy to write the tune: OLIVET, to which this song is most commonly paired. Mason (1792-1872) is justly called the father of American church music and by his labors were founded the germinating principles of national musical intelligence and knowledge, which afforded a soil upon which all higher musical culture has been founded. To him we owe some of our best ideas in religious church music, elementary musical education, music in the schools, the popularization of classical chorus singing, and the art of teaching music upon the Inductive or Pestalozzian plan.

Ray Palmer (1808-1887) He studied at Phillip's Academy, Andover, Mass., and graduated at Yale College in 1830. In 1835, he was ordained pastor of a Congregational Society in Bath, Maine, from which he removed, in 1850, to the pastorate of a Congregational Society in Albany, N.Y. He has published many hymns, some of his own authorship, and some translations. He has published some sermons and reviews. He published several volumes of poetry and hymns, including "*Sabbath Hymn*", "*Hymns and Sacred Pieces*" (1865), and "*Hymns of My Holy Hours*" (1868). His complete poetical works were published in 1876.

~ Tull