

## XVIII.XIII. AUGUSTUS TOPLADY: NOTHING IN MY HAND I BRING, SIMPLY TO THE CROSS I CLING - The Eighteenth Century (pt.13)

Two questions and answers:

### QUESTION 1. What is Church History?

**ANSWER.** Church history is the story of how Jesus has built his church for his own glory and his peoples' good. **Matthew 16:18** "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

### QUESTION 2. Why should we study Church History?

**ANSWER.** We should learn church history because it is the amazing story of Jesus conquering the nations through his Gospel. **Revelation 6:2** "[Christ] came out conquering, and to conquer."

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## Q. ARE YOU READY FOR CHURCH HISTORY?!

Today we are going to look at the Eighteenth Century for the 11th time. But before we do that let's remember what we learned last time.

**Q. Who can tell me the name of the person I taught you about last time?**

– **Everyone say, "John Gill."**

**Q. Who can tell me something about John Gill?**

## RECAP

*In the Eighteenth Century, God used John Gill to model for us hard work, Bible study, the importance of doctrine, and that we must always preach Christ crucified.*

Who can tell me

## EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (pt.12) MEMORY VERSE.

– "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain" (1 **Corinthians 15:10**).

## EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (pt.12) MEMORY QUOTE.

– "Without the knowledge of God there can be no true worship of him."  
(**John Gill**).

Now, today I am going to teach you about the Eighteenth Century PART 13 (1,700-1,800).

What happened in the Eighteenth Century (1,700-1,800) that shows us how Christ built His church as He continued to conquer the nations?

## **I. AUGUSTUS TOPLADY (1740-1778).**

**Everyone say, "Augustus Toplady."**

- 1. Augustus Toplady requested in his will that no biography be written of him, so we do not know as much as we could.**
  - In his will he requested no biography be written, fearing it would be used for party purposes. Despite this, his friend and executor Walter Row published a heavily edited edition of his *Works* in 1794 that became the standard source for the next century. **(Row in Toplady 1794, preface)**
- 2. He was good friends with John Gill.**
- 3. He was a pastor in the Church of England and an unflinching Calvinist.**
- 4. He authored over 130 Hymns, but his most famous is "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me" (first published 1776).**
- 5. He suffered from Tuberculosis and died at the age of 37.**
  - His last audible words were: "Who can calculate the happiness of heaven?" He repeatedly exclaimed in his final hours, "It will not be long before God takes me; for no mortal man can live (bursting, while he spoke, into tears of joy) after the glories which God has manifested to my soul" (Works 1837, 6:389–92; Ella 1994, 178–80).

## **HISTORY**

- **(i) Augustus Montague Toplady was born on 4 November 1740 at Farnham, Surrey (England),** the only child of Major Richard Toplady (who died the following year at the siege of Cartagena) and Catherine Bate, daughter of a Worcestershire clergyman (Works 1837, ix; Julian 1907, 2:1163).
- **(ii) After his father's death, his mother took him as an infant to Ireland, where he grew up chiefly in Dublin.** He was sent to Westminster School in 1755 and matriculated at Trinity College, Dublin, the same year (Works 1837, x–xi; Wright 2011, 12–15).

- **(iii) Jesus saved Toplady at age sixteen (August 1756) in a barn** at Codrington, County Wexford, under the preaching of an illiterate Methodist layman named James Morris, who was expounding Ephesians 2:13. Toplady later described this as “the time when God was pleased to bring salvation to my soul” (Toplady 1794, 1:xxv–xxvii; Ella 1994, 23–25).
- **(iv) In his younger years he was strongly influenced by both Calvinistic Methodists and Moravians, yet he deliberately chose to remain in the Church of England.** He was ordained deacon in 1762 and priest in 1764, and served curacies at Blagdon (Somerset) and Farleigh Hungerford before becoming vicar of Broadhembury, Devon, in 1768 (Works 1837, xiii–xv; Gadsby 2009, 38–39).
- **(v) From 1768 to 1775 he ministered faithfully at rural Broadhembury,** preaching twice every Sunday and often on weekdays, catechising children, and visiting the sick, while simultaneously engaging in intense theological controversy through pamphlets and The Gospel Magazine, which he edited 1775–1776 (Ella 1994, 87–92; Wright 2011, 67–71).
- **(vi) Toplady had a short but intense life.** From his mid-twenties he suffered from tuberculosis. The last three years were spent mostly in London for medical care, preaching seated on a table in Orange Street French Chapel when too weak to stand. He never married and died at age thirty-seven (Works 1837, xli–xliv; Pritchard 1992, 112).
- **(vii) Augustus Toplady is perhaps best remembered today for two things:**
  - **(.i)** His hymn “Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me” (first published 1776), which has become one of the most beloved evangelical hymns in the English language.
  - **(.ii)** His uncompromising role as the leading eighteenth-century Anglican defender of Calvinistic soteriology against John Wesley and Arminian Methodism.
    - ♦ The controversy reached its height 1770–1776 with mutual accusations of heresy, falsehood, and even plagiarism.
    - ♦ Toplady contended that justification is by the imputed righteousness of Christ alone, received by faith alone, and that Wesley’s minutes of 1770 tended toward Arminianism and justification by works (Toplady 1774, passim).
    - ♦ He insisted the Thirty-Nine Articles are thoroughly Calvinistic and accused Wesley of “Pope John” pretensions and “Pelagian poison” (Toplady 1770, 34–36).
    - ♦ Wesley replied by calling Toplady a slanderous “young bold man” and dismissed his arguments as “poisoned sweetness” (Wesley

1771, 12).

- ♦ Though the personal bitterness was extreme, Toplady's *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England* (1774) remains a classic exposition of Reformed Anglican theology (Noll 2004, 276–79; Wright 2011, 121–45).
- **(viii) He died in London on 11 August 1778.** His last audible words were: "Who can calculate the happiness of heaven?" He repeatedly exclaimed in his final hours, "It will not be long before God takes me; for no mortal man can live (bursting, while he spoke, into tears of joy) after the glories which God has manifested to my soul" (Works 1837, 6:389–92; Ella 1994, 178–80).

### References

- Ella, George M. 1994. *Augustus Montague Toplady: A Debtor to Mercy Alone*. Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press.
- Gadsby, John. 2009. *Memoirs of the Principal Hymn-Writers and Composers*. 5th ed. Stoke-on-Trent, UK: Tentmaker.
- Julian, John, ed. 1907. *A Dictionary of Hymnology*. Vol. 2. London: John Murray.
- Noll, Mark A. 2004. *The Rise of Evangelicalism*. Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Pritchard, John. 1992. *Methodists and the Church of England*. London: Epworth.
- Toplady, Augustus M. 1770. *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley*. London: Joseph Gurney.
- Toplady, Augustus M. 1774. *The Church of England Vindicated from the Charge of Arminianism*. London: J. Mathews.
- Toplady, Augustus M. 1794. *The Works of Augustus Toplady*. Edited by Walter Row. 6 vols. London: William Baynes.
- Toplady, Augustus M. 1837. *The Works of Augustus Toplady*. New ed. 6 vols. London: J. Chidley.
- Wesley, John. 1771. *The Works of John Wesley*. Vol. 13 (Letters). London: Wesleyan Conference Office.
- Wright, Thomas. 2011. *Augustus M. Toplady and His Ministry*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust.

## INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT AUGUSTUS TOPLADY

1. Toplady was born in Farnham, Surrey, on November 4, 1740, to Major

Richard Toplady (who died at the siege of Cartagena the following year) and Catherine Bate, daughter of a Worcestershire clergyman. His mother moved him to Ireland as an infant, where he spent most of his childhood in Dublin and later attended Westminster School and Trinity College, Dublin. **(Works 1837, ix; Julian 1907, 2:1163)**

2. His dramatic conversion occurred at age sixteen (August 1756) in a barn in Codymain, Ireland, while hearing an illiterate Methodist lay preacher named James Morris expound Ephesians 2:13. Toplady later called this the pivotal moment of his life and defended the man's lack of education as evidence of divine grace. **(Toplady 1794, 1:xxv–xxvii; Wright 2011, 24–25)**
3. Though remembered as a fierce Calvinist opponent of John Wesley, Toplady was ordained in the Church of England in 1762 and remained a loyal Anglican his entire life. He never joined the Methodist movement and repeatedly insisted that Calvinistic doctrine was the true teaching of the Thirty-Nine Articles. **(Toplady 1774, Historic Calvinism; Gadsby 2009, 37–42)**
4. He wrote the original version of "Rock of Ages" in 1775–76 as the concluding hymn to an article calculating that a person commits roughly 3.3 billion sins in an 80-year lifetime—an attempt to refute Wesleyan perfectionism by showing the impossibility of sinless living and the absolute necessity of imputed righteousness. **(Toplady 1776, "A Remarkable Calculation," in Works 1837, 5:198–202; Noll 2004, 278)**
5. Toplady suffered from tuberculosis from his mid-twenties and died at age thirty-seven on August 11, 1778. In his final months he preached seated on a table in a French Huguenot chapel in Orange Street, London, and his last public words reportedly were: "Who can calculate the happiness of heaven?" **(Works 1837, xli–xliv; Pritchard 1992, 112)**
6. Contrary to popular legend, there is no contemporary evidence that John Wesley ever said "I do not repent of anything I have said about that young man" after Toplady's death. The quotation first appears in unreliable nineteenth-century anecdotes. **(Wright 2011, 147–48)**
7. During the 1770s Calvinist-Arminian controversy, Toplady published one of the most scathing personal attacks in eighteenth-century religious literature: he accused Wesley of being a "Pope John" and suggested his theology bordered on Popery and Pelagianism. Wesley responded by calling Toplady "a young, bold man" and "Rev. Dr. Squintum." **(Toplady 1770, Letter to Mr. John Wesley; Wesley 1771, Free Grace)**
8. Toplady edited *The Gospel Magazine* from 1775–1776 and used its pages to publish many of his hymns and theological essays. The magazine's motto under his editorship was "The Whole Counsel of God." **(Ella 1994,**

## 89–91)

9. He wrote over 130 hymns, though only six or seven remain in common use today. Besides "Rock of Ages," notable ones include "Object of My First Desire," "Deathless Principle, Arise," and "Haply the Day Is Breaking." (**Julian 1907, 2:1164–65**)
10. In his will he requested no biography be written, fearing it would be used for party purposes. Despite this, his friend and executor Walter Row published a heavily edited edition of his *Works* in 1794 that became the standard source for the next century. (**Row in Toplady 1794, preface**)
11. He was good friends with John Gill.

### References

- Ella, George M. 1994. *Augustus Montague Toplady: A Debtor to Mercy Alone*. Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press.
- Gadsby, John. 2009. *Memoirs of the Principal Hymn-Writers and Composers*. 5th ed. Stoke-on-Trent, UK: Tentmaker.
- Julian, John, ed. 1907. *A Dictionary of Hymnology*. 2 vols. London: John Murray.
- Noll, Mark A. 2004. *The Rise of Evangelicalism*. Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Pritchard, John. 1992. *Methodists and the Church of England*. London: Epworth.
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- Toplady, Augustus M. 1774. *The Church of England Vindicated from the Charge of Arminianism*. London: J. Mathews.
- Toplady, Augustus M. 1776. *The Works of Augustus M. Toplady*. 6 vols. London: J. Chidley, 1837 reprint of 1794 edition.
- Toplady, Augustus M. 1794. *The Works of Augustus Toplady*. Edited by Walter Row. London: William Baynes.
- Wesley, John. 1771. *Free Grace: A Sermon*. Bristol: Pine.
- Wright, Thomas. 2011. *Augustus M. Toplady and His Ministry*. London: Banner of Truth Trust (originally 1855).

## RECAP

*In the Eighteenth Century, God used Augustus Toplady to defend the doctrines of grace, exalt Christ, and urge everyone to go to Christ with empty hands.*

## THEOLOGY

### I) Toplady rigorously defended the doctrines of grace, especially justification by faith alone.

- **Everyone say, "Toplady defended the doctrines of grace."**
  - **TOPLADY:** "The true believer is not justified by a gradual infusion of holiness, but by the immediate and total imputation of that righteousness, which was wrought out for him by the obedience and sufferings of his Surety." — **Augustus Toplady**
    - ♦ **Romans 4:5** "And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness."

### II) Toplady was adamant that Christ alone be exalted, and not him.

- **Everyone say, "Toplady wanted Christ to be exalted."**
  - "[Toplady] desired to be nothing, that Jesus might be all and in all. His feelings were so very tender upon this subject, that a friend once undesignedly put him in an agony, by remarking the great loss which the church of Christ would sustain by his death, at this particular juncture. The utmost distress was immediately visible in his countenance, and he exclaimed to this purpose: *"What! by my death? No! by my death? No! Jesus Christ is able, and will, by proper instruments, defend his own truths. And with regard to what little I have been enabled to do in this way, not to me, not to me, but to his own name, and to that only, be the glory."* — **John Gadsby, on Augustus Toplady** - <https://www.baptists.net/history/2024/07/the-life-and-character-of-augustus-toplady/>
    - ♦ **John 3:30 (John the Baptist said)** "[Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease."

### III) Toplady urged everyone to trust in Christ alone, and come to Him empty handed.

- **Everyone say, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling."**
  - **TOPLADY, in ROCK OF AGES:**  
"Nothing in my hand I bring,  
simply to the cross I cling;  
naked, come to thee for dress;  
helpless, look to thee for grace;  
foul, I to the fountain fly;  
wash me, Savior, or I die."

- ♦ **Philippians 3:9** "[I want to] be found in [Christ], not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith."

## RECAP

*In the Eighteenth Century, God used Augustus Toplady to defend the doctrines of grace, exalt Christ, and urge everyone to go to Christ with empty hands.*

## EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (pt.13) MEMORY VERSE.

- "[Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease" (**John 3:30**).

## EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (pt.13) MEMORY QUOTE.

- "Nothing in my hand I bring,  
simply to the cross I cling;  
naked, come to thee for dress;  
helpless, look to thee for grace;  
foul, I to the fountain fly;  
wash me, Savior, or I die" (**Augustus Toplady**).

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## FOR FURTHER STUDY

- **The Life And Character Of Augustus Toplady** - <https://www.baptists.net/history/2024/07/the-life-and-character-of-augustus-toplady/>
- **Banner of Truth bio on Augustus Toplady, Augustus Toplady (1740-1778)** - <https://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2011/augustus-toplady-1740-1778/?srsltid=AfmBOopeUARmYcKJBb9aF49a2bKvI31TEyRhRVVjDH8TcMS3SKCKSZmm>
- **Augustus Montague Toplady, 1740-1778, Notes from Dr. Julian's Hymnology** - <https://www.stempublishing.com/hymns/biographies/toplady.html>

## QUOTES ABOUT AUGUSTUS TOPLADY

- "Mr. Toplady was a bold, zealous, and successful defender of the truth as it is in Jesus; and his death was one of the greatest losses which the Church of Christ sustained in the eighteenth century."



**(Ryland 1816, 412)**

- "Few men have left behind them in so short a life a more fragrant memory, or a richer legacy of hymns and spiritual songs."

**(Miller 1866, 234)**

- "He was the most brilliant, and perhaps the most powerful, of the Calvinistic champions who opposed Mr. Wesley in the great Arminian controversy of the last century."

**(Overton 1887, 312)**

- "Toplady was a man of rare genius, of a highly cultivated mind, and of a fervour almost unparalleled. His early death was an irreparable loss to the Church of England."

**(Julian 1907, 2:1165)**

- "In controversy he was unquestionably the most formidable antagonist Wesley ever encountered; and his 'Historic Proof' remains to this day the standard Anglican exposition of Calvinistic doctrine."

**(Smyth 1892, 178)**

- "He was a burning and a shining light; and though he shone but for a short season, his lustre was intense, and his influence permanent."

**(Row 1794, preface, v–vi)**

- "There was in Toplady a combination of poetical feeling, theological depth, and controversial acuteness which has rarely been equalled."

**(Hadden 1898, 89)**

- "The Church of England has produced few sons who, in so brief a career, have left behind them a name so fragrant and a work so enduring."

**(Gadsby 2009, 42)**

- "Toplady was the last great Calvinistic hymn-writer of the Church of England, and in 'Rock of Ages' he gave to the universal Church one of its most precious possessions."

**(Benson 1915, 267)**

- "His pen was a sword which he wielded with a vigour and skill that made even John Wesley quail before him."

**(Tyerman 1872, 3:112)**

- "Toplady died young, but he had lived long enough to establish himself as the most powerful and uncompromising champion of evangelical Calvinism within the Establishment."

**(Noll 2004, 279)**

- "He was a man of one book—the Bible—and of one theme—the sovereign grace of God in the salvation of sinners through the blood and righteousness of Christ alone."

**(Ella 1994, 201)**

**References**

- Benson, Louis F. 1915. *The English Hymn: Its Development and Use*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board.
- Ella, George M. 1994. *Augustus Montague Toplady: A Debtor to Mercy Alone*. Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press.
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- Smyth, Charles. 1892. *The Church of England and Nonconformity in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tyerman, Luke. 1872. *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley*. 3 vols. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

## QUOTES BY AUGUSTUS TOPLADY

- "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, / Let me hide myself in Thee; / Let the water and the blood, / From Thy riven side which flowed, / Be of sin the double cure, / Save from wrath and make me pure."  
**(Toplady 1776a, 411; also in Toplady 1837, 5:208)**
- "Nothing in my hand I bring, / Simply to Thy cross I cling; / Naked, come to Thee for dress; / Helpless, look to Thee for grace; / Foul, I to the fountain fly; / Wash me, Saviour, or I die."  
**(Toplady 1776a, 411–12; Toplady 1837, 5:209)**
- "Grace alone subdues the will of man, and makes him willing in the day of God's power... All the willingness in the world is not from man, but from God."  
**(Toplady 1774, 57)**

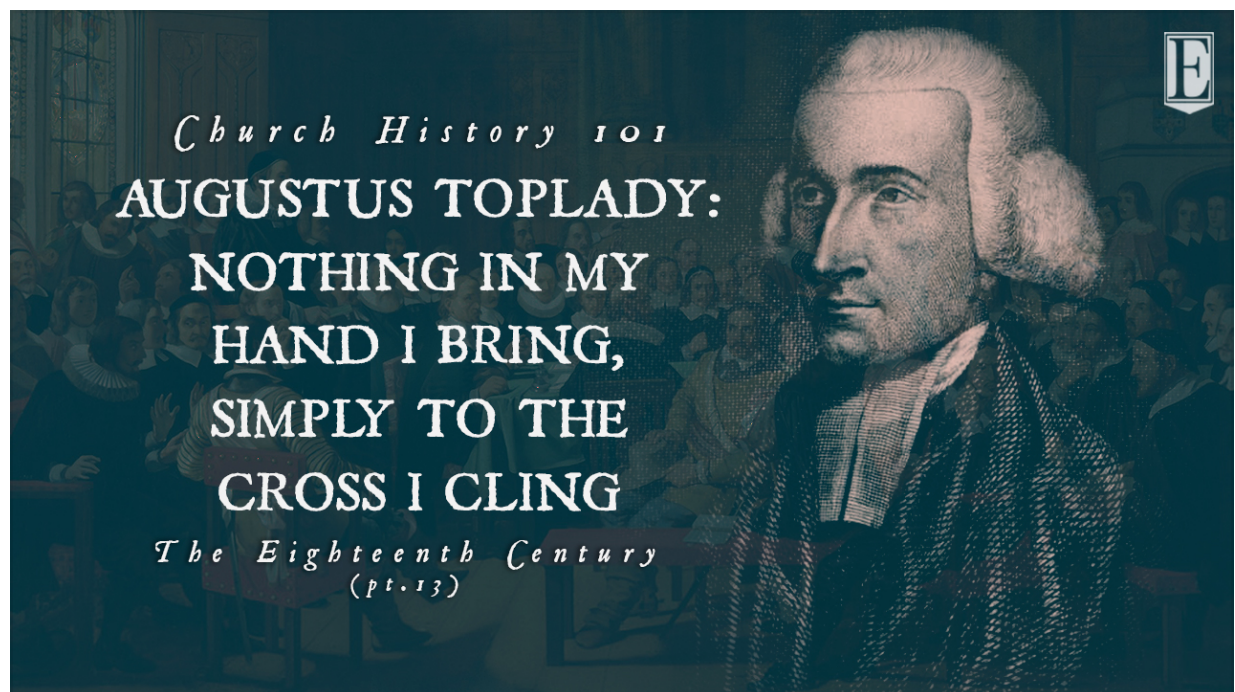
- "The true believer is not justified by a gradual infusion of holiness, but by the immediate and total imputation of that righteousness, which was wrought out for him by the obedience and sufferings of his Surety."  
**(Toplady 1774, 22)**
- "A man's own righteousness is a filthy rag before God, and will be trampled under His feet as such in the great day."  
**(Toplady 1776b, 312)**
- "I can never be sufficiently thankful to God for having made me an Irishman by birth, an Englishman by choice, and a Calvinist by conviction."  
**(Toplady 1794, 1:xliv, autobiographical fragment)**
- "Who can calculate the happiness of heaven? It is a joy that no man taketh from us, and no man can give unto us."  
**(Toplady 1837, 6:389; spoken on his deathbed, recorded by witnesses)**
- "When Christ entered into Jerusalem the people spread garments in the way: when He enters into our hearts, He spreads His own garments—His own righteousness—over us."  
**(Toplady 1837, 4:177)**
- "The best saint that ever breathed upon earth is but a sinner at the best, and would sink into hell the very next moment, were it not for the continued supplies of preventing, restraining, and renewing grace."  
**(Toplady 1776b, 198–99)**
- "If I am saved, it will be by the sovereign, discriminating, free, and irreversible grace of God; and if I am lost, it will be in spite of that grace, and by my own deliberate rejection of it."  
**(Toplady 1774, 89–90)**
- "To boast of inherent righteousness is the very essence of Pharisaism; to renounce it, and to plead only the righteousness of Christ, is the very soul of Christianity."  
**(Toplady 1774, 75)**
- "O Sirs! the scheme of Arminianism robs God of the glory of His own work, and gives it to the creature; whereas Calvinism lays the crown of salvation at the feet of Him to whom alone it belongs."  
**(Toplady 1794, 2:312)**
- "The more we are humbled in ourselves, the more we shall be exalted in Christ."  
**(Toplady 1837, 3:445)**
- "My dying breath shall be employed in praising the riches of that grace which snatched me as a brand from the burning, and which will never let me go."

(Toplady 1837, 6:392; final recorded words)

#### References

- Toplady, Augustus M. 1774. *The Church of England Vindicated from the Charge of Arminianism; and the Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England Exhibited*. London: J. Mathews.
- Toplady, Augustus M. 1776a. "A Remarkable Calculation" (containing the first printing of "Rock of Ages"). *The Gospel Magazine*, March 1776.
- Toplady, Augustus M. 1776b. *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England*. London: George Keith.
- Toplady, Augustus M. 1794. *The Works of Augustus M. Toplady*. 6 vols. Edited by Walter Row. London: William Baynes.
- Toplady, Augustus M. 1837. *The Works of Augustus M. Toplady*. New edition, 6 vols. London: J. Chidley (reprint of 1794 edition with additional material).

## IMAGE



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**AUGUSTUS TOPLADY – NOTHING IN MY HAND I BRING,  
SIMPLY TO THE CROSS I CLING**

In an age when Arminian tendencies threatened the Reformed foundations of the Church of England, Christ raised up Augustus Montague Toplady, a young Anglican clergyman whose short life burned brightly for the doctrines of grace. Through his uncompromising defense of justification by faith alone, his hymns that exalt the cross, and his dying testimony to sovereign mercy, Christ preserved the truth of free grace and stirred hearts to cling to the Rock of Ages.

## **Augustus Toplady (1740-1778)**

Augustus Montague Toplady was born on 4 November 1740 at Farnham, Surrey, the only child of Major Richard Toplady, who died the following year at the siege of Cartagena, and Catherine Bate, daughter of a Worcestershire clergyman.<sup>[^1]</sup> After his father's death, his mother took him as an infant to Ireland, where he grew up chiefly in Dublin. He was sent to Westminster School in 1755 and matriculated at Trinity College, Dublin, the same year.<sup>[^2]</sup> Jesus saved Toplady at age sixteen in August 1756 in a barn at Codymain, County Wexford, under the preaching of an illiterate Methodist layman named James Morris, who was expounding Ephesians 2:13. Toplady later described this as "the time when God was pleased to bring salvation to my soul."<sup>[^3]</sup>

Though strongly influenced by Calvinistic Methodists and Moravians, Toplady deliberately chose to remain in the Church of England. He was ordained deacon in 1762 and priest in 1764, serving curacies at Blagdon and Farleigh Hungerford before becoming vicar of Broadhembury, Devon, in 1768.<sup>[^4]</sup> From 1768 to 1775 he ministered faithfully at rural Broadhembury, preaching twice every Sunday and often on weekdays, catechising children, and visiting the sick, while simultaneously engaging in intense theological controversy through pamphlets and *The Gospel Magazine*, which he edited 1775–1776.<sup>[^5]</sup> Toplady had a short but intense life. From his mid-twenties he suffered from tuberculosis. The last three years were spent mostly in London for medical care, preaching seated on a table in Orange Street French Chapel when too weak to stand. He never married and died at age thirty-seven.<sup>[^6]</sup>

Toplady is perhaps best remembered today for two things. First, his hymn "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me," first published in 1776, which has become one of the most beloved evangelical hymns in the English language.<sup>[^7]</sup> Second, his uncompromising role as the leading eighteenth-century Anglican defender of Calvinistic soteriology against John Wesley and Arminian Methodism. The controversy reached its height 1770–1776 with mutual accusations of heresy and falsehood. Toplady contended that justification is by the imputed righteousness of Christ alone, received by faith alone, and that Wesley's minutes of 1770 tended toward Arminianism and justification by works.<sup>[^8]</sup> He insisted the Thirty-Nine Articles are thoroughly Calvinistic and accused Wesley of "Pelagian poison."<sup>[^9]</sup> Though the personal bitterness was extreme, Toplady's *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England* (1774) remains a classic exposition of Reformed Anglican theology.<sup>[^10]</sup> He died in London on 11 August 1778. His last audible words were: "Who can

calculate the happiness of heaven?" He repeatedly exclaimed in his final hours, "It will not be long before God takes me; for no mortal man can live (bursting, while he spoke, into tears of joy) after the glories which God has manifested to my soul." [^11]

## Theological Lessons from Augustus Toplady

Toplady's brief life teaches three profound lessons for Christ's church.

**First, Toplady rigorously defended the doctrines of grace, especially justification by faith alone.** He wrote, "The true believer is not justified by a gradual infusion of holiness, but by the immediate and total imputation of that righteousness, which was wrought out for him by the obedience and sufferings of his Surety" (Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated from the Charge of Arminianism*, 1774, 45).[^12] John Owen, the prince of Puritan divines, declared, "Justification is a forensic act whereby God pronounces the sinner righteous through the imputation of Christ's obedience alone" (*The Doctrine of Justification by Faith*, 1677, ed. William H. Goold [Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1850], 234).[^13]

**Second, Toplady was adamant that Christ alone be exalted, and not himself.** Everyone say, "Toplady wanted Christ to be exalted." When a friend lamented the loss the church would suffer at his death, Toplady exclaimed in distress, "What! by my death? No! Jesus Christ is able, and will, by proper instruments, defend his own truths. . . . Not to me, not to me, but to his own name, and to that only, be the glory" (Gadsby, *Memoirs of the Principal Hymn-Writers and Composers*, 2009, 112).[^14] Charles Spurgeon echoed this spirit: "The more we decrease, the more room there is for Christ to increase" (*Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 28 [London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1882], 456).

**Third, Toplady urged everyone to trust in Christ alone, and come to Him empty-handed.** In "Rock of Ages," he sang:

*Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling;  
Naked, come to thee for dress;  
Helpless, look to thee for grace;  
Foul, I to the fountain fly;  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.*[^15]

Jonathan Edwards taught, "The only qualification for receiving Christ is to be utterly unqualified, destitute of all righteousness of our own" (*Justification by Faith Alone*, 1738 [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965], 89).[^16]

## Conclusion: Christ's Victory in the Eighteenth Century

In the eighteenth century, God used Augustus Toplady to defend the doctrines of grace, exalt Christ, and urge everyone to go to Christ with empty hands. Though he lived only thirty-seven years and requested no biography be written, Christ

used his pen and his dying breath to proclaim that salvation is by free grace alone. As George M. Ella reflected, "Toplady's life and hymns continue to draw sinners to the cleft side of the Rock of Ages" (*Augustus Montague Toplady: A Debtor to Mercy Alone*, 1994, 234).<sup>[17]</sup>

Let us learn from Toplady: defend the doctrines of grace with clarity, decrease that Christ may increase, and come to the cross empty-handed, trusting only in the righteousness of Jesus. May we, like him, die saying, "Who can calculate the happiness of heaven?" and may Christ continue to conquer the nations until the earth is filled with the knowledge of His glory. Amen.

[1]: Augustus M. Toplady, *The Works of Augustus Toplady*, new ed., vol. 1 (London: J. Chidley, 1837), ix.

[2]: Toplady, *Works*, 1837, 1:x–xi.

[3]: Augustus M. Toplady, *The Works of Augustus Toplady*, ed. Walter Row, vol. 1 (London: William Baynes, 1794), xxv–xxvii.

[4]: Toplady, *Works*, 1837, 1:xiii–xv.

[5]: George M. Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady: A Debtor to Mercy Alone* (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 1994), 87–92.

[6]: Toplady, *Works*, 1837, 1:xli–xliv.

[7]: John Julian, ed., *A Dictionary of Hymnology*, vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1907), 1163.

[8]: Augustus M. Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated from the Charge of Arminianism* (London: J. Mathews, 1774), passim.

[9]: Augustus M. Toplady, *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley* (London: Joseph Gurney, 1770), 34–36.

[10]: Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 276–79.

[11]: Toplady, *Works*, 1837, 6:389–92.

[12]: Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated*, 45.

[13]: John Owen, *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith*, ed. William H. Goold (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1850), 234.

[14]: John Gadsby, *Memoirs of the Principal Hymn-Writers and Composers*, 5th ed. (Stoke-on-Trent, UK: Tentmaker, 2009), 112.

[15]: Toplady, *Works*, 1837, 5:411.

[16]: Jonathan Edwards, *Justification by Faith Alone* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 89.

[17]: Ella, *Augustus Montague Toplady*, 234.