

Eternal Father, Strong To Save

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Eternal Father, Strong To Save

Verses 1-3 by William Whiting, *cento, alt.* (1860); Music “Melita” by John Bacchus Dykes (1861)

Meter: 8 8 8 8 8 8

Source: *The Book of Worship for United States Forces*, #196, pp. 192-193, (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1974)

1. Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bidd’st the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

2. O Christ! Whose voice the waters heard
And hushed their raging at Thy Word,
Who walked upon the foaming deep,
And calm amidst its rage didst sleep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

3. Most Holy Spirit! Who didst brood
Upon the chaos dark and rude,
And bid its angry tumult cease,
And give, for wild confusion, peace;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

4. Lord, guard and guide the men who fly
Through the great spaces in the sky.
Be with them always in the air,
In darkening storms or sunlight fair;
Oh, hear us when we lift our prayer,
For those in peril in the air!
Mary C. D. Hamilton, 1915

5. Eternal Father, grant, we pray,
To all Marines, both night and day,
The courage, honor, strength, and skill
Their land to serve, thy law fulfill;
Be thou the shield forevermore
From every peril to the Corps.
J. E. Seim, 1966

6. Lord, stand beside the men who build,
And give them courage, strength, and skill.
O grant them peace of heart and mind,
And comfort loved ones left behind.
Lord, hear our prayers for all Seabees,
Where'er they be on land or sea.

R. J. Dietrich, 1960

7. Lord God, our power evermore,
Whose arm doth reach the ocean floor,
Dive with our men beneath the sea;
Traverse the depths protectively.
 O hear us when we pray, and keep
 Them safe from peril in the deep.
 David B. Miller, 1965

8. O God, protect the women who,
In service, faith in thee renew;
O guide devoted hands of skill
And bless their work within thy will;
 Inspire their lives that they may be
 Examples fair on land and sea.
 Lines 1-4, Merle E. Strickland, 1972 and
 adapted by James D. Shannon, 1973
 Lines 5-6, Beatrice M. Truitt, 1948

9. Creator, Father, who dost show
Thy splendor in the ice and snow,
Bless those who toil in summer light
And through the cold antarctic night,
 As they thy frozen wonders learn;
 Bless those who wait for their return.
 L. E. Vogel, 1965

10. Eternal Father, Lord of hosts,
Watch o'er the men who guard our coasts.
Protect them from the raging seas
And give them light and life and peace.
 Grant them from thy great throne above
 The shield and shelter of thy love.
 George H. Jenks, Jr., 1955

11. Eternal Father, King of birth,
Who didst create the heaven and earth,
And bid the planets and the sun
Their own appointed orbits run;
 O hear us when we seek thy grace
 For those who soar through outer space.
 J. E. Volonte, 1961

12. Creator, Father, who first breathed
In us the life that we received,
By power of thy breath restore
The ill, and men with wounds of war.
 Bless those who give their healing care,
 That life and laughter all may share.

Galen H. Meyer, 1969
Adapted by James D. Shannon, 1970

13. God, Who dost still the restless foam,
Protect the ones we love at home.
Provide that they should always be
By thine own grace both safe and free.
 O Father, hear us when we pray
 For those we love so far away.
 Hugh Taylor, date unknown

14. Lord, guard and guide the men who fly
And those who on the ocean ply;
Be with our troops upon the land,
And all who for their country stand:
 Be with these guardians day and night
 And may their trust be in thy might.
 Author Unknown, 1955

15. O Father, King of earth and sea,
We dedicate this ship to thee.
In faith we send her on her way;
In faith to thee we humbly pray:
 O hear from heaven our sailor's cry
 And watch and guard her from on high!
 Author and date unknown

16. And when at length her course is run,
Her work for home and country done,
Of all the souls that in her sailed
Let not one life in thee have failed;
 But hear from heaven our sailor's cry,
 And grant eternal life on high!
 Author and date unknown

Notes:

1. In verse 2, line 3, "Who walked upon the foaming deep"; originally "walkedst."
2. Some attributions have been updated.
3. Verse 10. George H. Jenks, Jr., 1955. Jenks, bandmaster of the United States Coast Guard, was director of cadet musical activities at the Coast Guard Academy, New London, Connecticut, when he wrote these words, which are known as the Coast Guard Hymn. It was first published in the *Book of Worship for United States Forces* in 1974.

Other Verses

Aloft in solitudes of space,
Uphold them with Thy saving grace.
Thou who supports with tender might
The balanced birds in all their flight.
 Lord, if the tempered winds be near,
 That, having Thee, they know no fear.
 Mary C. D. Hamilton, 1915

God, who dost still the restless foam,
Protect the ones we love at home.
Provide that they should always be
By Thine own grace both safe and free.
 O Father, hear us when we pray
 For those we love so far away.
 Hugh Taylor, date unknown

O Father, King of earth and sea,
We dedicate this ship to Thee.
In faith we send her on her way;
In faith to Thee we humbly pray:
 O hear from Heaven our sailor's cry
 And watch and guard her from on high!
 Author and date unknown

Oh, Watchful Father who dost keep
Eternal vigil while we sleep
Guide those who navigate on high
Who through grave unknown perils fly,
 Receive our oft-repeated prayer
 For those in peril in the air.
 Emma Mayhew Whiting, 1943

The following are from [Eternal Father, Strong To Save](#), US Navy, accessed June 25, 2020.

Naval (General)

Lord, guard and guide the men who fly
And those who on the ocean ply;
Be with our troops upon the land,
And all who for their country stand:
 Be with these guardians day and night
 And may their trust be in thy might.
 Author unknown, about 1955

Submariners

Lord God, our power evermore
Whose arm doth reach the ocean floor
Dive with our men beneath the sea
Traverse the depths protectively

O hear us when we pray, and keep
them safe from peril in the deep.
David B. Miller, 1965

Navy Seals

Eternal Father, faithful friend,
Be swift to answer those we send
In brotherhood and urgent trust
On hidden missions dangerous
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For SEALs in air, on land, and sea.
Author and date unknown

The Original Four Verses

Eternal Father, Strong To Save

Original title: For those at Sea.

William Henry Monk, ed., *Hymns Ancient And Modern*, #222, pp. 308-309 (London: J. Alfred Novello, 1861).

1. Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bid'st the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea.

2. O Christ, Whose voice the waters heard
And hushed their raging at Thy word,
Who walkedst on the foaming deep,
And calm amidst its rage didst sleep;
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea.

3. Most Holy Spirit, Who didst brood
Upon the chaos dark and rude,
And bid its angry tumult cease,
And give, for wild confusion, peace;
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea.

4. O Trinity of love and power,
Our brethren shield in danger's hour;
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,
Protect them wheresoe'er they go;
Thus evermore shall rise to Thee
Glad hymns of praise from land and sea.

Notes (excerpted from Wikipedia)

The original hymn was written in 1860 by Rev. William Whiting from Winchester, United Kingdom, who grew up near the ocean on the coasts of England, and at the age of thirty-five had felt his life spared by God when a violent storm nearly claimed the ship he was traveling on, instilling a belief in God's command over the rage and calm of the sea. As headmaster of the Winchester College Choristers' School some years later, he was approached by a student about to travel to the United States, who confided in Whiting an overwhelming fear of the ocean voyage. Whiting shared his experiences of the ocean and wrote the hymn to "anchor his faith". In writing it, Whiting is generally thought to have been inspired by Psalm 107, which describes the power and fury of the seas in great detail:

Some went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters.

They saw the works of the Lord, his wonderful deeds in the deep.

For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves.

They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away.

Scriptural References

- The first verse refers to God the Father forbidding the waters to flood the earth as described in [Psalm 104](#).
- The second verse refers to Jesus' miracles of stilling a storm and walking on the waters of the Sea of Galilee, together with [Psalm 107:29](#) ("He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed."). Concerning the calming of the storm, see [Matthew 8:23-27](#), [Mark 4:35-41](#), and [Luke 8:22-25](#). Concerning walking on the waters of the Sea of Galilee, see [Matthew 14:22-34](#), [Mark 6:45-53](#), and [John 6:15-21](#).
- The third verse references the Holy Spirit's role in the creation of the earth in the Book of [Genesis, Chapter 1](#).
- The fourth verse is a reference to [Psalm 107, verses 23-32](#).

Rev. John B. Dykes composed the tune "Melita", in 88 88 88 iambic meter, to accompany the *Hymns Ancient And Modern* version of 1861. Dykes was a well-known composer of nearly three hundred hymn tunes, many of which are still in use today. "Melita" is an archaic term for Malta, an ancient seafaring nation which was then a colony of the British Empire, and is now a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. It was the site of a shipwreck, mentioned in [Acts of the Apostles \(chapters 27-28\)](#), involving the Apostle Paul. Dykes wrote many tunes associated with Christmas hymns; for additional biographical details, see [John Bacchus Dykes](#) at "The Hymns And Carols of Christmas."

The hymn appears in many hymnals, including the *Army and Navy Hymnal*, which was used by American forces during World War II, and the *New English Hymnal*.

This hymn was among those sung on August 9, 1941, at a church service aboard the Royal Navy battleship HMS Prince of Wales attended by Winston Churchill (who requested that the hymn be sung) and Franklin D. Roosevelt at the conference creating the Atlantic Charter. There is no indication that the hymn was sung at the final church service on the RMS Titanic, just hours before it sank. However, it was sung later that day by second-class passengers in a musical prayer service.

This hymn has been played or sung at a number of funerals for those who have served in or been associated with the US Navy.

- The funeral of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who had served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy
- The funeral of President John F. Kennedy, who was commanding officer of Motor Torpedo Boat PT-109 in World War II, by the Navy Band
- The funeral of President Richard Nixon, who served in the Navy during World War II in the Pacific Theater
- The funeral of President Ronald Reagan, played by the Navy Band and the Coast Guard Band
- The funeral of Senator John McCain, a US Navy officer and pilot, at the Washington National Cathedral on September 1, 2018 sung by the congregation and choir
- The funeral of President George H. W. Bush, a US Navy officer and pilot in World War II, at the Washington National Cathedral on December 5, 2018

[Eternal Father, Strong To Save](#), Wikipedia.

A copy of the influential [Hymns Ancient And Modern](#) (1861) is available at the Internet Archive. According to the Wikipedia article, the 1861 edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* experienced immediate and overwhelming success, becoming possibly the most popular English hymnal ever published. It set the standard for many later hymnals such as the 1906 *English Hymnal*. Still in print, and now published by [The Canterbury Press](#), *Hymns Ancient and Modern* has had total sales in 150 years of over 170 million copies. [Hymns Ancient and Modern](#), Wikipedia, accessed June 26, 2020.

Eternal Father, Strong To Save

Verses 1-3 by William Whiting, *cento, alt.* (1860), Verse 4 by Mary C. D. Hamilton (1915);
 Music “ Melita” by John Bacchus Dykes (1861)

Meter: 88 88 88 – Key of C – 4/4 Time

Source: *Complete Mission Praise*, #122, p. 217 (London: Marshall Pickering, 1999)

Source: [Eternal Father, Strong To Save](http://www.hymnary.org), Hymnary.org

Introduction: Last line of verse.

1. E-ternal Father, strong to save,
 C **F** **C**
 Am7 **G** **Dsus** **G**
 Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
 G7 **C** **A7** **D**
 Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep
 Em
 Its own appointed limits keep;
 C7 **F** **D** **G**
 Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
 C **G** **C**
 For those in peril on the sea!

2. O Christ! Whose voice the waters heard
 C **F** **C**
 Am7 **G** **Dsus** **G**
 And hushed their raging at Thy Word,
 G7 **C** **A7** **D**
 Who walked up-on the foaming deep,
 Em
 And calm amidst its rage didst sleep;
 C7 **F** **D** **G**
 Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
 C **G** **C**
 For those in peril on the sea!

3. Most Holy Spirit! Who didst brood
 C **F** **C**
 Am7 **G** **Dsus** **G**
 Up-on the chaos dark and rude,
 G7 **C** **A7** **D**
 And bid its angry tumult cease,
 Em
 And give, for wild confusion, peace;
 C7 **F** **D** **G**
 Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
 C **G** **C**
 For those in peril on the sea!

4. Lord, guard and guide the men who fly
 C **F** **C**
 Am7 **G** **Dsus** **G**
 Through the great spaces in the sky.
 G7 **C** **A7** **D**
 Be with them always in the air,
 Em
 In darkening storms or sunlight fair;
 C7 **F** **D** **G**
 Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
 C **G** **C** **FC**
 For those in peril on the sea! A-men.

Eternal Father, Strong To Save

Verses 1-3 by William Whiting, *cento, alt.* (1860), Verse 4 by Mary C. D. Hamilton (1915);
Music “Melita” by John Bacchus Dykes (1861)

Meter: 88 88 88 – Key of G – 4/4 Time

Source: *Complete Mission Praise*, #122, p. 217 (London: Marshall Pickering, 1999)

Source: [Eternal Father, Strong To Save](#), Hymnary.org

Introduction: Last line of verse.

G **C** **G**
1. Eternal Father, strong to save,
 Em7 **D** **Asus** **D**
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
 D7 **G** **E7** **A**
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep
 Bm
Its own ap - point - ed lim - its keep;
 G7 **C** **A** **D**
 Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
 G **D** **G**
 For those in peril on the sea!

G **C** **G**
2. O Christ! Whose voice the waters heard
 Em7 **D** **Asus** **D**
And hushed their raging at Thy Word,
 D7 **G** **E7** **A**
Who walked up-on the foaming deep,
 Bm
And calm amidst its rage didst sleep;
 G7 **C** **A** **D**
 Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
 G **D** **G**
 For those in peril on the sea!

G **C** **G**
3. Most Holy Spirit! Who didst brood
 Em7 **D** **Asus** **D**
Up-on the chaos dark and rude,
 D7 **G** **E7** **A**
And bid its angry tumult cease,
 Bm
And give, for wild confusion, peace;
 G7 **C** **A** **D**
 Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
 G **D** **G**
 For those in peril on the sea!

G **C** **G**
4. Lord, guard and guide the men who fly
 Em7 **D** **Asus** **D**
Through the great spaces in the sky.
 D7 **G** **E7** **A**
Be with them always in the air,
 Bm
In darkening storms or sunlight fair;
 G7 **C** **A** **D**
 Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
 G **D** **G** **C** **G**
 For those in peril on the sea! A - men.