

♩ = 66

Eternal Father Strong to Save

Arr: Dr. R.W.Macmillan

John B. Dykes (1861)

Hymn

<http://BCFDPipesAndDrums.com/>

Last Modified 04/12/05

ETERNAL FATHER, STRONG TO SAVE (The Navy Hymn)

Music: "Melita" in Hymns Ancient & Modern, 1861

The first four verses of are from a poem written in 1860 by the Rev. William Whiting, an English schoolmaster and clergyman. He wrote the ode, "Eternal Father, Strong to Save", for a student of his about to depart for America. Whiting's inspiration came from once experiencing a furious storm in the Mediterranean Sea. The following year another English clergyman, the Rev. John B. Dykes, a composer of over 300 hymns, penned a tune for the poem. Dykes fittingly named the tune after a locale associated with a Biblical shipwreck. Melita was the island the Apostle Paul reached after his ship went down (Acts 28:1); today we know it as the isle of Malta.

Now commonly known as the "Navy Hymn" in most hymnals, "Eternal Father, Strong to Save" is part of religious services, retirement ceremonies and funerals in the US Navy, the Navies of the British Commonwealth and the French Navy. It was the favorite hymn of U.S. President Franklin Delanor Roosevelt and was sung at his funeral in Hyde Park, New York, April 1945. The Navy Band played it in 1963 as U.S. President John Kennedy's body was carried up the steps of the U.S. Capitol to lie in state. Roosevelt served as Secretary of the Navy and Kennedy was a PT boat commander in World War II. In 1879 Lieutenant Commander (later to become Rear Admiral) Charles Train was the conductor of the Midshipman Choir at the Naval Academy. He concluded each Sunday's Divine Service with the singing of "Eternal Father, Strong to Save," a tradition which continues to this day. On the evening of April 14, 1912 Rev. Ernest Carter conducted a worship service on board the passenger ship Titanic on her maiden voyage from Southampton, England to New York City. Among the hymns sung was "Eternal Father, Strong to Save." After the service the Rev. said "It is the first time that there have been hymns sung on this boat . . . but we trust and pray it won't be the last."

<http://www.cyberhymnal.org/hym/e/t/eternalf.htm>

<http://www.lt-smash.us/archives/001306.html>

Rev. Whiting's first verse didn't quite fit Rev. Dykes' melody, so some lines and words were rearranged:

The next three verses were:

*O thou who bidd'st the ocean deep;
Its own appointment limits keep,
Thou Who dost bind the restless wave,
Eternal Father, strong to save;
O hear us when we cry to Thee;
For all in peril on the sea.*

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

O Christ! Whose voice the waters heard
And hushed their raging at Thy word,
Who walked'st on 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!

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!

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.