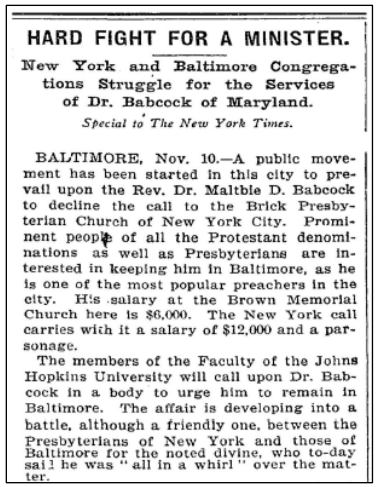
- He and Katherine had two sons, both of whom died in infancy.
  - The death of the last in 1890 sent him into a deep depression.
  - After spending a month in the hospital, he recovered and soldiered on.
- In 1899, he was contacted by a prominent church in NYC.
  - People across Baltimore were alarmed at the possibility of losing him, and they began a campaign to retain him.
  - It even caught the attention of the New York Times which went so far as to publish the competing salary offers.



HARD FIGHT FOR A MINISTER.

New York and Baltimore Congregations Struggle for the Services of Dr. Babcock of Maryland.

Special to The New York Times.

BALTIMORE, Nov. 10.—A public movement has been started in this city to prevail upon the Rev. Dr. Maltbie D. Babcock to decline the call to the Brick Presbyterian Church of New York City. Prominent people of all the Protestant denominations as well as Presbyterians are interested in keeping him in Baltimore, as he is one of the most popular preachers in the city. His salary at the Brown Memorial Church here is $6,000. The New York call carries with it a salary of $12,000 and a parsonage.

The members of the Faculty of the Johns Hopkins University will call upon Dr. Babcock in a body to urge him to remain in Baltimore. The affair is developing into a battle, although a friendly one, between the Presbyterians of New York and those of Baltimore for the noted divine, who to-day said he was "all in a whirl" over the matter.

- In 1900, Babcock moved to NYC where he began his third pastorate.
  - He was having an impactful ministry when his life was cut short.
  - In 1901, his church paid for him and his wife to travel with ministry friends to Egypt and the Holy Land.
  - While sailing home, he and others were stricken with a severe bacterial infection. He died unexpectedly in the hospital in Naples, Italy, at the age of 42.
- After his death, his wife began publishing collections of his sermons, poems, and hymns.
  - This hymn began as a poem entitled, "My Father's World."
  - It was originally 16 stanzas long.
  - In 1915, a close friend of the Babcock's, Franklin L. Shephard, edited the poem down & set it to a traditional English melody.

III. Links to Resources

ORIGINAL POEM

The Internet Archive

YOUTUBE VIDEOS

Hymns of Grace

Fernando Ortega

THIS IS MY FATHER'S WORLD

Hymn History for Father's Day

I. Contributors to the Hymn

- Text: Maltbie D. Babcock
- Tune: Franklin L. Shephard

II. Biography of Maltbie Davenport Babcock (1858-1901)

- Born in Syracuse, NY, into a devout Presbyterian family with roots in colonial America
- Excelled as a student at Syracuse University
  - Decorated athlete, pitching for the championship baseball team, and medaling in swimming and running
  - Accomplished musician, proficient in singing, conducting, and playing piano, organ, and violin
  - Diligent student with a keen intellect
- Continued education at Auburn Theological Seminary (NYC)
- After graduating, he married his wife, Katherine, and was installed as pastor of a Presbyterian church in Lockport, NY.
  - This beautiful area in the Niagara Falls escarpment between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario beckoned him to take many hikes & runs.
  - He would often tell his wife before leaving, "I'm going to see my Father's world."
- His skillful preaching, filled with conviction and carefully smithed words, caught the attention of many.
- In 1887, he was called to pastor a notable church in Baltimore where he remained for 13 years.
  - He had a deep ministry to John's Hopkins University students.
  - He became much in demand as a preacher at colleges around the country.

[continued on back]

Stanza 1

This is my Father's world,
And to my list'ning ears
All nature sings and round me rings
The music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world,
I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas—
His hand the wonders wrought.

Stanza 2

This is my Father's world.
The birds their carols raise,
The morning light, the lily white,
Declare their Maker's praise.
This is my Father's world.
He shines in all that's fair;
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass,
He speaks to me everywhere.

Stanza 3

This is my Father's world.
O let me ne'er forget
That tho' the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the ruler yet.
This is my Father's world:
The battle is not done:
Jesus Who died shall be satisfied,
And earth and Heav'n be one.

Whole Song

- Each stanza twice declares, "This is my Father's world," based on Babcock's oft used line before hiking.
- The expression speaks of God the Father's role as Creator, Sustainer, Sovereign, and Redeemer.
- While numerous biblical texts undergird the poem, the two foremost for Babcock were Psalms 33:5-9 & 50:10-12.

Stanza 1

- The opening stanza draws us into Babcock's experience of creation as a witness to God's power.
- The phrase "the music of the spheres" borrows from a Renaissance theory that the heavenly bodies produced a kind of inaudible music as they spun in concert.
- While the theory was no longer in vogue in Babcock's day, it was a useful turn of phrase to speak of heaven's declaring the glory of God. Cf. Ps 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the expanse shows forth His handiwork."

Stanza 2

- The concept of Ps 19:1 is extended to the terrestrial world with all its beautiful little wonders.
- The line, "In the rustling grass I hear Him pass," does not teach pantheism but stresses God's personal presence in His creation.

Stanza 3

- The final stanza turns to thoughts of the world's consummation at the Second Coming of Christ.
- While the world may seem greatly out of control, God's sovereign hand is still leading it to a glorious conclusion.
- The final lines speak of Christ's eternal joy when heaven & earth are forever united in the eternal state.