



Registered Charity No. 1193766

Sunday 18th July 2021

A Reflection on the Psalms

The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me down to lie
in pastures green; he leadeth me
the quiet waters by.

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven,
to his feet thy tribute bring;
ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
who like me his praise should sing?
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Praise the everlasting King.

The opening verses of two well-known and much-loved hymns, by different writers, in different centuries, and very different in tone, but what they have in common is that they are both based on Psalms.

The Lord's my Shepherd is based on Psalm 23, a Song of Trust and Confidence, expressing faith in the Lord as the one who will provide whatever the circumstances. "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for you are with me" (v 4) wrote the psalmist. Because of this confidence in the face of death, the hymn has long been popular at funerals.

"Praise my soul the King of heaven" is based on Psalm 103, an Hymn of Praise giving glory to the Lord "who forgives all your sins, who heals all your diseases, ...who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy" (v 3-4)

"Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a right spirit within me."

(Psalm 51.10) is a prayer that is often used in Anglican liturgies. It comes from a very different type of psalm, a Psalm of Penitence. It is traditionally associated with King David, as his prayer of confession after he has been confronted by the prophet Nathan about his adulterous affair with Uriah's wife Bathsheba.

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15.34) is Jesus' cry of dereliction from the cross, the desperate prayer of someone in the last few moments of a painful and ignominious death. They are the opening words of a psalm that oscillates between the despair of someone dying and a faith that is based on the many blessings that God has given him throughout his life. Perhaps Jesus prayed this psalm as his final prayer before he died, a psalm that expresses an inner struggle, but ends on a note of hope.

The Psalms are wonderfully varied, a treasury of devotion and prayer available to us all to read, to sing and to pray.

David Durston 16.7.21

HYMN REFLECTION FOR JULY 18th

So, our last on-line Hymn Reflection. I am most grateful to Becky for inviting me to write these 74 Reflections, and to all of you who have read them.

Although I had long intended that this hymn should be the subject of the last Reflection, regardless of the readings, by chance (?) it fits very well. The psalm and St. Paul tell us to sing the gôd spel, the Good News, in hymns and spiritual songs. The writer of Chronicles says, "Make known his deeds among the peoples ... tell of his wonderful works." St. Paul says do it now; "make the most of the time". WE have a Gospel to proclaim, and now, after sixteen months of restrictions, we are free (almost!) to get out and proclaim it in person, and together. Thanks be to God.

Our hymn was written in 1968 by Canon Edward J. Burns, Honorary Canon of Bradford Cathedral and Bishop's Adviser for Hospital Chaplaincies. It was written for a "Call to Mission" in the Blackburn Diocese (our readings were both "calls to mission", weren't they?) The logical sequence in verses 2 - 5 fitted the themes of that event. It was included in *100 Hymns for Today* in 1969 and has since spread rapidly throughout the English-speaking world.

The tune, *Fulda*, is older, having been written by William Gardiner (1770 - 1853). He was a hosier, but also a keen amateur musician, who claimed to have introduced Beethoven's music to Britain in 1794. (I suspect that might need some corroboration; Haydn just might have thought of it). He was also said to have sent (as a hosier) some socks to Haydn himself, with his tune *Austria (Glorious things of thee are spoken)* embroidered on them. *Fulda* has many of the features which we have considered over the last sixteen months which make a good tune - notes of different lengths, sequences based on inverted chords, modulation, a diminished 7th chord, climax at the right place, and written in B flat. It is, as Richard Seal would say, a goodie.

Adieu. Malcolm

We have a gospel to proclaim,
good news for all throughout the earth;
the gospel of a Saviour's name:
we sing his glory, tell his worth.

Tell of that glorious Easter morn:
empty the tomb, for he was free.
He broke the power of death and hell
that we might share his victory.

Tell of his birth at Bethlehem,
not in a royal house or hall
but in a stable dark and dim
the Word made flesh, a light for all.

Tell of his reign at God's right hand,
by all creation glorified.
He sends his Spirit on his Church
to live for him, the Lamb who died.

Tell of his death at Calvary,
hated by those he came to save,
in lonely suffering on the cross:
for all he loved, his life he gave.

Now we rejoice to name him King:
Jesus is Lord of all the earth.
This gospel-message we proclaim:
we sing his glory, tell his worth.