

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 25 July 2022

Before you launch into this week's attached Musings, I want, briefly, to introduce you to a lesser-known 18th-19th century hymn writer, many of whose hymns are sung regularly to this very day. His name? Thomas Kelly.

In brief:

Thomas Kelly (1769-1855) was born and died in Ireland. In his mid-teens, he entered Trinity College, Dublin, to study law. But, following his conversion, he abandoned the study of law for the preaching of the Gospel and became a clergyman of the Church of Ireland.

His evangelical preaching led to the Archbishop of Dublin's forbidding him to preach in the Established Church. Mr Kelly was compelled, therefore, to go elsewhere to proclaim those glorious truths which later found expression in his hymns. He formally left the Established Church in 1803, several years after he published his first collection of hymns.

Over a period of almost 60 years, Mr Kelly composed a total 765 hymns, all of which were published in a single volume two years before his home-call.

In the final preface to his hymn book, Mr Kelly remarks:

'It will be perceived by those who read these hymns, that *though there is an interval between the first and the last of near sixty years, both speak of the same great truths, and in the same way.*

'In the course of that long period, the author has seen much and heard much; but nothing that he has seen or heard has made the least change in his mind that he is conscious of, as to the grand truths of the Gospel. What pacifies the conscience then, does so now'.

I claimed earlier that many of Mr Kelly's hymns 'are sung regularly to this very day'. As evidence, I list below a selection. I wonder how many you recognise.

Behold the Lamb with glory crowned.
Glory, glory everlasting.
Glory to God on high.
'God is love!' His word has said it.
Look, ye saints, the sight is glorious.
Meeting in the Saviour's name.
Saviour, through the desert lead us.
Stricken, smitten and afflicted.
The head that once was crowned with thorns.
The night is far spent, the day is at hand.
The atoning work is done.
We'll sing of the Shepherd that died.
We sing the praise of Him who died.

I conclude with the closing stanzas of another of Mr Kelly's hymns ('Praise the Saviour, ye who know Him'):

*Keep us, Lord, oh! keep us cleaving
To Thyself, and still believing
Till the hour of our receiving
Promised joys in heaven.*

*Then we shall be where we would be,
Then we shall be what we should be,
Things that are not now, nor could be,
Soon shall be our own.*

Well said, Mr Kelly.

(Apart from numerous bibliographies in popular volumes on Christian poetry and hymns, the main sources I consulted are:

- (i) *'Memoir of the late Rev. Thomas Kelly, of Dublin'*, The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle, February 1856, accessible and downloadable at <https://www.brethrenarchive.org/people/hymn-writers/thomas-kelly-1769-1854/snippets/memoir-from-the-evangelical-magazine/>;
- (ii) Grayson Carter, *'Anglican Evangelicals: Protestant Secessions from the Via Media, c. 1800-1850'*, pages 69-77;
- (iii) John Julian, *'A Dictionary of Hymnology'*, pages 614-615; and
- (iv) *'Thomas Kelly'*, Hymnary.org, accessible at https://hymnary.org/person/Kelly_Thomas.)

For this week's main 'Musings', please see below.

Happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

(i) Scripture

Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion ...

He sendeth forth His commandment upon earth: His word runneth very swiftly.

He giveth snow like wool: He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes.

He casteth forth His ice like morsels: who can stand before His cold?

He sendeth out His word, and melteth them: He causeth His wind to blow, and the waters flow.

He sheweth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel.

He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them.

Praise ye the Lord.

Psalm 147. 12-20 (King James Version)

(ii) Food for thought.

'Serve' or 'seek'.

'There are but two classes of people who can be called reasonable: those who serve God with all their hearts because they know Him, and those who seek Him with all their heart because they know Him not'.

(Blaise Pascal, *'Pensées'*, translated by G. F. Rawlings, page 133.)

'Simple trust'.

'When I was ten, I professed faith in Christ ... I came to Jesus alone in the woods ... There was no dramatic experience such as some can relate; I came as a child in simple trust.

'I did not understand all about the plan of salvation. I do not understand all about electricity, but I don't intend to sit in the dark until I do'.

(Vance Havner, *'Biography'*, accessed at <http://vancehavner.com/biography/>.)

George Müller: the testimony of C. H. Spurgeon.

'He acts not upon common sense, but upon something higher than common sense—upon uncommon faith. Oh, that we had that uncommon faith to take God at His word! He cannot and He will not permit the man that trusts Him to be ashamed or confounded'.

(C. H. Spurgeon, *'True Prayer – True Power!'*, a sermon preached on August 12, 1860 at The New Park Chapel, London.)

Seven scriptural testimonies to the unique privileges of Israel.

- (i) 'What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?' (Deut. 4. 7-8);
- (ii) The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth' (Deut. 7. 6);
- (iii) 'Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord' (Deut. 33. 29);
- (iv) 'What one nation in the earth is like ... Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to Himself' (2 Sam. 7. 23);
- (v) 'He shows His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation' (Psa. 147. 19-20);
- (vi) 'What advantage then hath the Jew? ... Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God' (Rom. 3. 1-2); and
- (vii) 'Israelites; to whom pertains the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever' (Rom. 9. 5).

'There came a leper to Him' (Mark 1. 40).

'Lepers were victims of far more than the disease itself. The disease robbed them of their health, and the sentence imposed on them as a consequence robbed them of their name, occupation, habits, family and fellowship, and worshiping community.

'To ensure against contact with society, lepers were required to make their appearance as repugnant as possible. Josephus speaks of the banishment of lepers as those "in no way differing from a corpse" (*Antiquities of the Jews*). The reference to Miriam's leprosy in Numbers 12. 12 prompted various rabbis to speak of lepers as "the living dead", whose cure was as difficult as raising the dead.

'The diagnosis of leprosy thus encompassed both medical and social dimensions. Leprosy contaminated Israel's status as a holy people (although it did not contaminate Gentiles since they were already considered unclean).

'Other illnesses had to be healed, but leprosy had also to be cleansed (e.g., Matt. 11. 5). Mark's account of Jesus and the leper is a mirror image of these tragic realities, for there is no reference to "healing", but there are four references to "cleansing" in six verses [Mark 1. 40-45]'.
(James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark (The Pillar New Testament Commentary)*, on Mark 1. 40.)

'Jesus went forth, and His disciples, into the villages of Caesarea Philippi: and in the way He asked his disciples, saying unto them, "Who do men say that I am?"' (Mark 8. 27).

'The proper question to ask about why Jesus took them there to reveal His identity, has to do with the fact that various pagan gods had been worshipped there, and of course there is the new temple of Augustus ...

'Jesus took them there to say "I am the reality of which these pagan gods are the parody". Otherwise, it is strange that He would take them to Gentile territory to reveal the truth about Himself, and to emphasize that the Son of man must suffer as a ransom for many ...

'The questions about "who" and "what" and "why" are raised about Jesus in Mark chapters 1-8 and answered in that last chapter, as the necessary prequel to revealing to the disciples what His final mission was.

'In other words, you need to know who Jesus is before you can understand why He had to die—and it is surely no accident that four times in Mark chapters 8-10 Jesus stresses His coming suffering etc. That makes Mark chapters 11-16 the record of mission accomplished'.

(Ben Witherington III, *Jesus in Context— The Dialogue*, posted 18 June 2022.)

'When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!"' (John 19. 30).

- (i) 'Jesus dies on Friday afternoon, with the Sabbath approaching, just as God completed His work of creation at the end of the sixth day in order to rest on the seventh [Gen. 2. 1-2]'.
(Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*, page 551.)

- (ii) It often goes unnoticed that this is the only cry of the seven uttered by the Lord Jesus on the cross which was not spoken to somebody.

'I am He who lives, and became dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and of Hades' (Rev. 1. 17-18).

'It is an integral part of His resurrection triumph that He not only broke free from the prison house but became possessed of the keys, so that His own are no longer to be bound there ... the last word is not with death, but with death's Conqueror ...

"I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die" (John 11. 25-26). In these words, we see that the believer, like other men, will undergo biological death, but that is not the point. He will never die in the sense that matters, for he that believes on Christ has entered into a new existence where death has no part'.

(Leon Morris, 'The Wages of Sin: An Examination of The New Testament Teaching On Death', pages 25-28.)

'All the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us' (2 Cor. 1. 20).

(i) 'The first half says, "All the promises of God find their Yes in Him". The second half says, "That is why it is through Him that we utter our Amen to God for His glory ...

'In Jesus Christ, God says His Yes to us through His promises; and in Christ we say our Yes to God through prayer'.

(John Piper, 'Jesus is God's Amen'; accessed at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/jesus-is-gods-amen>.)

(ii) 'All the promises of God receive their answering "Yes!" in Him; and for that reason it is through Him that our answering "Amen!" goes up to God, for His glory'.

(F. F. Bruce, 'An Expanded Paraphrase of the Epistles of Paul', page 127.)

'Let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus' (Phil. 4. 6-7).

'In all things ... instead of disquieting ourselves ... we ought to present our request to God with prayer, with supplication ... so that, even while making our petition to Him, we can already give thanks, because we are sure of the answer of His grace, be it what it may ...

'It does not say, you will have what you ask; but God's peace will keep your hearts. ... Oh, what grace! that even our anxieties are a means of our being filled with this marvellous peace'.

(J. N. Darby, 'Synopsis of the Books of the Bible' on Phil. 4. 1-23.)

'Think on these things' (Phil. 4. 8); 'Gird up the loins of your mind' (1 Pet. 1. 13).

'You didn't select your birthplace or birth date. You didn't choose your parents or siblings. You don't determine the weather or the amount of salt in the ocean. There are many things in life over which you have no choice.

'But the greatest activity of life is well within your dominion.

'You can choose what you think about'.

(Max Lucado, 'Anxious for Nothing', Chapter 9.)

The 'better' letter (Heb. 13. 22).

(i) God's Son (Heb. 1. 4);

(ii) Things (Heb. 6. 9; 11. 40);

(iii) Hope (Heb. 7. 19);

(iv) Covenant (Heb. 7. 22; 8. 6);

(v) Promises (Heb. 8. 6);

(vi) Sacrifice (Heb. 9. 23; 12. 24);

(vii) Possessions (Heb. 10. 34);

(viii) Country (Heb. 11. 16);

(ix) Resurrection (Heb. 11. 35).

'Abram went up from Egypt ... to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place of the altar which he had made there at first' (Gen. 13. 1-4).

When we get away from the Lord, the only thing to do is to return to the very place we left the path. That is, to go forward, we need to go back.

'Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works' (Rev. 2. 5).

'Sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire' (Rom. 7. 8).

'In Adam all fell, and from him all, both Gentiles and Jews, inherited a nature too weak for the arduous attainment of righteousness. Human nature is carnal now, not spiritual, and, therefore, unequal to this supreme spiritual achievement.

'The law had no creative power to make the carnal spiritual. On the contrary, it aggravated the evil. It actually multiplied offenses; for ... the very knowledge of sin tempts to its commission; the very command not to do anything is to a diseased nature a reason for doing it.

'This was the effect of the law: it multiplied and aggravated transgressions. And this was God's intention.

'Not that He was the author of sin; but, like a skilful physician, who has sometimes to use appliances to bring a sore to a head before he heals it, He allowed the heathen to go their own way and gave the Jews the law, that the sin of human nature might exhibit all its inherent qualities, before He intervened to heal it. The healing, however, was His real purpose all the time: He concluded all under sin, that He might have mercy upon all [cf. Rom. 11. 32].

(James Stalker, *'The Life of St. Paul'*, pages 49-50.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

1. Dan runs a small farm in Georgia, America. Having trouble making ends meet, he decided to drive his tractor through the surrounding lanes to see if any passing motorists needed help.

One day, a motorist, whose car was bogged down in a muddy ditch, paid Dan fifty dollars for Dan to use his tractor to pull the vehicle out of the ditch.

When the car was back on dry ground, the motorist said to Dan, 'At those prices, I suppose you wish you could pull motorists out of muddy ditches day and night'.

'No, there's no way I could do that', said Dan.

'Why on earth not?' questioned the motorist.

'Oh', Dan replied, *'at night I have to haul water to the ditches'*.

2. Henry turned up at the office an hour late for the third time in the week.

As he feared, he found his boss, Mr Roberts, waiting for him.

'Well, and what's your excuse today, Henry?' Mr Roberts asked sarcastically. 'I hope it's a good story this time'.

'Really, I couldn't help it, sir', Henry sighed, 'just about everything went wrong this morning. My wife offered to drive me to the dockside. She got ready in ten minutes, drove as fast as she could to the dockside ... but, sadly, the ferry didn't turn up!'

'So', Henry continued, 'rather than let you down, Mr Roberts, I swam across the river, ran quickly half a mile up the steep hill this side, hired a bicycle and cycled twenty miles across the fields to get to the office. As you can see, it wasn't my fault that I'm late'.

'I'm sorry, my boy', a disappointed Mr Roberts responded. 'You'll have to do better than that. *No woman can get ready in ten minutes!*'