

Wednesday Musical Meditations

July 8, 2020

His Eye is On the Sparrow

Civilla D. Martin (1866-1948)
and Charles Gabriel (1856-1932)

His Eye is On the Sparrow

This Gospel hymn was written in 1905 by lyricist Civilla D. Martin and composer Charles H. Gabriel. It is most associated with actress-singer Ethel Waters who used the title for her autobiography. Mahalia Jackson's recording of the song was honored with the Grammy Hall of Fame Award in 2010. The theme of the song is inspired by the words of David in the Psalms and Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew in the Bible: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye (Psalm 32:8). "Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26) and "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:29–31). (Wikipedia)

Spirit of the Living God

Daniel Iverson (1890-1977)

Spirit of the Living God

The composite hymn text is a prayer for the Holy Spirit to work renewal in the individual heart (first stanza) and to make these renewed people one in love and service (second stanza).

Daniel Iverson (b. Brunswick, GA, 1890; d. Asheville, NC, 1977) wrote the first stanza and tune of this hymn after hearing a sermon on the Holy Spirit during an evangelism crusade by the George Stephens Evangelistic Team in Orlando, Florida, 1926. The hymn was sung at the crusade and then printed in leaflets for use at other services. Published anonymously in Robert H. Coleman's *Revival Songs* (1929) with alterations in the tune, this short hymn gained much popularity by the middle of the century. Since the 1960s it has again been properly credited to Iverson. (hymnary.org)

One Bread, One Body

John B. Foley (b. 1939)

One Bread, One Body

This hymn first appeared in the collection, *Wood Hath Hope* (1978), by John Foley, S.J. (b. 1939). Its memorable refrain draws directly upon I Corinthians 10:16-17: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ: The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (NRSV).

Other biblical references include Galatians 3:28 in stanza 1: "Gentile or Jew, servant or free, woman or man, no more." I Corinthians 12 refers to "one body" in several places. A prayer in the early Christian

document *Didache*, dated from 50-120 C.E., provides a basis for thoughts in the third stanza, "Grain for the fields, scattered and grown, gathered to one, for all." (umcdiscipleship.org)

Voluntary in G

Samuel Jackson (1818-1885)

Voluntary in G

Samuel P. Jackson (1818-1885) was an American organist and composer. His father, James Jackson, was an organ builder; his family immigrated to the United States in 1825, where Samuel learned his father's trade. From 1830—42 he played the organ at St. Clement's Church; at St. Bartholomew from 1842—61; later at Christ Church, Church of the Ascension, and the Anthon Memorial Church. He was a well-known teacher of piano, organ, and harmonium. For many years he was music-proof reader to G. Schirmer, New York. Besides a variety of vocal sacred music, he published *Gems for the Organ* and four books of very popular *Organ-Voluntaries*. (Wikipedia)

O day of radiant gladness (hymn 48)

17th-century German tune

O Day of Radiant Gladness

Es flog ein kleins Waldvoegelein, a German folk tune, was first published in an early-seventeenth-century manuscript collection from Memmingen, Germany. It later became a setting for Christopher Wordsworth's "O Day of Rest and Gladness" in George R. Woodward's *Songs of Syon* (1910 edition). (hymnary.org)

Blessed Jesus, at thy word (hymn 440)

Johann Rudolf Ahle (1625-1673)

Blessed Jesus At Thy Word

In this hymn, we acknowledge our need for the illumination of the Holy Spirit to fully understand God's message to us. We also recognize and claim the promise of Christ concerning this help: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26 ESV). (hymnary.org)

Holy Spirit, ever living (hymn 511)

Cyril Taylor (1907-1992)

Holy Spirit, Ever Living

Cyril V. Taylor composed ABBOT'S LEIGH, the tune that correspond to this hymn, in May of 1941 when he was working for the Religious Broadcasting Department of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The BBC had received complaints about the use of AUSTRIA (tune for the Austrian national hymn) during this time of war, a tune then set to "Glorious Things of You Are Spoken" (506). Thus Taylor originally composed his tune for that text. First printed in a leaflet, ABBOT'S LEIGH was published in *Hymns Ancient and Modern Revised* (1950), *Congregational Praise* (1951), and the *BBC Hymn Book* (1951), of which Taylor was editor. No modern hymnal would want to omit this great twentieth-century tune! ABBOT'S LEIGH is named for a village near Bristol, England, where Taylor composed the tune (Bristol was wartime headquarters for the BBC).

This dramatic tune with bold melodic gestures and a bar form shape (AAB) is suitable for unison or harmony singing. Use strong accompaniment with a stately tempo. (*Psalter Hymnal Handbook*)

Sœur Monique

François Couperin (1668-1733)

Sœur Monique

François Couperin (1668-1733) was a French Baroque composer, organist and harpsichordist. He was known as *Couperin le Grand* ("Couperin the Great") to distinguish him from other members of the musically talented Couperin family. (Wikipedia)

Bringing In the Sheaves

Knowles Shaw (1834-1878)
and George Minor (1845-1904)

Bringing in the Sheaves

Knowles Shaw (1834-1878) was born near New London, in Morgan Township, on the 13th of October, 1834. His mother's maiden name was Huldah Griffin, and by both of his parents he was of Scottish extraction. His early life was spent in Rush County, Indiana, where he first began to play the violin, furnishing the music for many a dance. While the ball was going on he was converted, ceasing to play in the middle of the piece he was performing. Very soon thereafter he entered the ministry of the Christian Church. On the 11th of January, 1855, he married Miss Martha Finley. Most of his time after entering the ministry was spent in the West and South, and on account of his wonderful vocal powers he was called the "singing evangelist."

Reporters of the press at that time spoke of his singing as something wonderful. Soon after beginning to preach, he began to compose and to write music. He published at different times five singing-books: "Shining Pearls," "Golden Gate," "Sparkling Jewels," "The Gospel Trumpet," and the "Morning Star." "Bringing in the Sheaves" was one of the last songs from his hand.

His last meeting was held in Dallas, Texas, in May 1878. He was killed by a railroad accident, going from Dallas to McKinney, on the 7th of June, 1878. During his ministry he baptized over eleven thousand persons.

(*A History and Biographical Cyclopedia of Butler County, Ohio*. Cincinnati, 1882. DNAH Archives, from hymnary.org)

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

A. J. Showalter (1858-1924)
and Elisha Hoffman (1839-1929)

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

This hymn was inspired by Deuteronomy 33:27, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (KJV). As the hymn is sung, contemplate what it means to find refuge in our heavenly Father's arms in times of fear and trial, and to allow His joy and peace to replace our loneliness and anxiety.

Anthony J. Showalter received letters from two friends who had lost their wives about the same time. He wrote back to express his sympathy, and included a verse of Scripture: "The eternal God is thy

refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27 KJV). As he thought about that text, he wrote the music and refrain to this hymn. He asked Elisha Hoffman to write the stanzas. The hymn was first published in 1887 in *The Glad Evangel for Revival, Camp, and Evangelistic Meetings*, for which Showalter was an editor.

The text has three stanzas and a refrain. The theme of the text is the peace that comes from knowing that God will protect us, and how that knowledge removes our fears. (hymnary.org)

Surely it is God who saves me (hymn 679)

Skinner Chávez-Melo (1944-1992)

Surely It Is God Who Saves Me

Isaiah 12 consists of two stanzas of praise (12: 1-3 and 4-6). Together they make up the "First Song of Isaiah," one of the "lesser" Old Testament canticles used by the medieval church. As songs of joy and praise for God's deliverance, these stanzas are the climax to a group of prophecies spanning Isaiah 7-11. In stanza 1, Isaiah 12:2 echoes Exodus 15:2 of the Song of Moses (see also 152), and 12:3 uses the "wells of living water" image, often a biblical symbol of salvation (John 4:10). Stanza 2 reflects the praise language that abounds in the book of Psalms. Carl P. Daw, Jr. (b. Louisville, KY, 1944), versified these passages in 1981 for *The Hymnal 1982*, the Episcopal Church hymnal published in 1985. (hymnary.org)

There Is a Balm in Gilead

Emma Lou Diemer (b. 1927)

There Is a Balm in Gilead

Emma Lou Diemer (b. 1927) is an American composer. Diemer has written many works for orchestra, chamber ensemble, keyboard, voice, chorus, and electronic media. Diemer is a keyboard performer and over the years has given concerts of her own organ works at Washington National Cathedral, The Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles, Grace Cathedral and St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco, and others.

Works include many collections and single pieces for organ as well as many for solo piano, piano 4 hands, and two pianos. Her major chamber works include a piano quartet, string quartet, two piano trios, and sonatas and suites for flute, violin, cello, and piano as well as settings of the psalms for organ with other instruments. Diemer has written many choral works as well. She has written numerous hymns, several of which appear in church hymnals. Her songs number in the dozens, using texts by many contemporary and early poets including Walt Whitman, Amy Lowell, Sara Teasdale, Alice Meynell, Thomas Campion, Shakespeare, John Donne, her sister Dorothy Diemer Hendry, Emily Dickinson, Robert Lowell, and many others. (Wikipedia)

Lord, make us servants of your peace (hymn 593)

Lee H. Bristol (1923-1979)

Lord, Make Us Servants of Your Peace

Lee Hastings Bristol was educated at Hamilton College, Clinton, New York (BA); Trinity College of Music, London (organ studies); and the Institute for International Studies, Geneva, Switzerland (graduate studies). He worked in New York for the Bristol-Meyers Company (the family business) in advertising and public relations, 1948-62. From 1962-69, he served as president of Westminster Choir College, Princeton, New Jersey. In 1972, the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada made him a fellow of the society. (hymnary.org)

Lamp of our feet (hymn 627)

Bernard Barton (1784-1849)
and Johann Cruger (1598-1662)

Lamp of Our Feet

Barton, Bernard (1784-1849), commonly known as the "Quaker Poet." was born in London and educated at a Quaker school at Ipswich. In 1798 he was apprenticed to Mr. S. Jesup, a shopkeeper at Halstead, Essex, with whom he remained until 1806, when he removed to Woodbridge, Suffolk, and entered into business with his brother, as a coal and corn merchant. On the death of his wife at the end of the first year of their married life, he proceeded to Liverpool, where he acted as a private tutor for a short time. He returned to Woodbridge in 1810, where he secured an engagement in the local bank of the Messrs. Alexander. This appointment he held for 40 years. He died at Woodbridge, Feb. 19, 1849. During the same year his daughter published his *Poems and Letters, with a Memoir*. His poetical works were numerous. (hymnary.org)

O Christ, the Word Incarnate (hymn 632)

William How (1823-1897)
and Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

O Christ, the Word Incarnate

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-1847) was the son of banker Abraham Mendelssohn and the grandson of philosopher Moses Mendelssohn. His Jewish family became Christian and took the Bartholdy name (name of the estate of Mendelssohn's uncle) when baptized into the Lutheran church. The children all received an excellent musical education. Mendelssohn had his first public performance at the age of nine and by the age of sixteen had written several symphonies. Profoundly influenced by J. S. Bach's music, he conducted a performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* in 1829 (at age 20!) – the first performance since Bach's death, thus reintroducing Bach to the world. Mendelssohn organized the Domchor in Berlin and founded the Leipzig Conservatory of Music in 1843.

Traveling widely, he not only became familiar with various styles of music but also became well known himself in countries other than Germany, especially in England. He left a rich treasury of music: organ and piano works, overtures and incidental music, oratorios (including *St. Paul* or *Elijah* and choral works, and symphonies. He harmonized a number of hymn tunes himself, but hymnbook editors also arrange some of his other tunes into hymn tunes. (hymnary.org)

Concerto in C major, BWV 984

J. S. Bach (1685-1750)

Concerto in C major, 1st movement (after Johann Ernst, Prince of Sachsen-Weimar), BWV 984

Prince Johann Ernst was one of the junior dukes of the Weimar court during J.S. Bach's tenure there; he was also a talented violinist and composer. By the time of his tragically young death in 1715 at the age of eighteen, he had written several violin concertos, four of which Bach transcribed for keyboard. The movement you hear is taken from a concerto that survives only as a Bach transcription for organ, manuals only. (Russell Stinson)