

The Power of Cancelled Sin

In 1987 SPCK published a paper back entitled “A Flame of Love”. It was a personal choice of Charles Wesley’s verse by Timothy Dudley-Smith (Anglican Bishop of Thetford 1981-91 and well known modern hymn writer).

The fourth example he chose in the book is headed “For the Anniversary Day of One’s Conversion”. It starts:

*Glory to God, and praise and love
Be ever, ever given,
By saints below, and saints above,
The church in earth and heaven.*

There are a total of eighteen verses!!

You won’t find the verse above in STF, H&P, the 1933 MHB, Wesley’s Hymns etc. but you will find a hymn starting at verse 7 of Charles Wesley’s “poem”:

*O for a thousand tongues to sing
My dear Redeemer’s praise!
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace.*

It is Hymn number 1 in Wesley’s Hymns (10 verses); 1933 MHB (6 verses); number 744 in H&P (8 verses); and Hymn number 364 in STF (7 verses).

When you read the whole of the Charles Wesley piece you are not always impressed by its quality! Consider how much he wrote – riding to appointments etc.

It is not surprising that some of the material is trite, could even be describes as doggerel.

To illustrate this thought. Published in the 1933 MHB and in H&P but now dropped from STF is the hymn “Earth, rejoice, our Lord is King!” This includes the verse:

*Lo! To faith’s enlightened sight,
All the mountain flames with light;
Hell is nigh, but God is nigher,
Circling us with hosts of fire.*

A rather unusual (and forced?) rhyme!!

I have been led to understand that John Wesley often acted as an editor and in these eighteen verses there is a “patch of purple prose” starting at verse 7 which became the well known and loved hymn. Did John edit this? We may never know but the verses chosen clearly stand out from the rest.

Have you ever, I wonder, thought about the text in one of the verses we sing so regularly:

*He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.*

The cleansing in His blood; the forgiveness of sins; the freeing of the prisoner – these are the things we were celebrating last weekend, at Easter. How then can that cancelled sin have power?

Some years ago I had a hernia operation and I have the scar to remind me. The operation was 100% successful but very occasionally there is a small twinge where the repair was made – has it suddenly failed? – no, but the reminder and the evidential scar are always there. In the same way past sins leave their mark – **forgiven, YES; but NOT necessarily FORGOTTEN.**

To give you an example. We were attending a Bible Camp some years ago and after the worship and preaching there was an invitation to come forward for Ministry. Those of us in the congregation suddenly heard Colin Urquhart say to a lady who was talking to him, “Have you ever confessed this before?” The answer was, “Yes, 40 years ago”. Colin cried out to say that she had been forgiven at that time; however for that lady, the sin, whatever it was and cancelled at that time, still weighed heavily on her life.

Cancelled sin leaves a mark; can even dominate our lives. Sing with conviction that:

“He breaks the power of cancelled sin”

And pray that He does do that in your lives.