

25<sup>th</sup> May 2020

## Simplicity

***“O sancta simplicitas.” “O holy simplicity.”***

*Jan Huss, Bohemian philosopher, preacher and reformer*

*Appalachian Spring* by Aaron Copland is a special piece of music for me. Written in 1944 as a ballet, Copland scored it as an orchestral suite the following year. The most evocative part comes when a solo clarinet introduces five variations on the 19<sup>th</sup> century Shaker tune, *Simple Gifts*.

*'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free;  
'tis the gift to come down where we ought to be;  
and when we find ourselves in the place just right,  
'twill be in the valley of love and delight.  
When true simplicity is gained,  
to bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed;  
to turn, turn will be our delight,  
till by turning, turning we come 'round right.*

This may, of course, be theological. “Keep it simple,” God *could* be saying, “Be what you ought to be. Find your place. Don't be ashamed.” But it's more basic than that. The words simply accompany a tune as instructions to the dancers. When the dance is done properly, each dancer will end up where they began – they'll “come 'round right.”

Where will you end up when all of this is over? What will be *your* “valley of love and delight”? No one knows. So, let's concentrate on the “simple gifts”, especially if the dance becomes too complicated. Ask yourself, “What simple gift can I offer today as my contribution to a world that needs to come round right?” and “What are the simple gifts I can see and value in others, when I haven't been willing to before?”

“When true simplicity is gained, to bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed” – today or any other day of our lives.

### **A prayer for today**

*Ever present God: as I keep things simple, help me to know that's OK;  
as I learn new steps, help me to turn and turn in the right way for you;  
when I next link arms with others, help me to value the steps of their dance. Amen*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon*

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