

5th March 2021

Pattern

**“God forbid that we should give out a dream
of our own imagination for a pattern of the world.”**

Francis Bacon, The Great Instauration

As I researched *Lord of the Dance* for my piece yesterday, I discovered that the writer, Sydney Carter, had written extensively about his groundbreaking hymn. In 1974, the publisher *Stainer & Bell* produced “Green Print for Songs with Author’s Notes” by Sydney Carter. It contains many fascinating insights into the mind and thought-processes of a hymn-writer, and, in many ways, allows the words and concepts in his hymns to be even more alive and relevant than they might have been before.

Reflecting on *Lord of the Dance* Carter wrote, “I see Christ as the Incarnation of the piper who is calling to us. He dances that shape and pattern which is at the heart of our reality.” And here – behind the revolutionary words and metaphors of his hymn – is what appears to be a revolutionary concept. By Christ, he said, he didn’t just mean Jesus. “In other times and places, other planets, there may be other ‘Lords of the Dance’. But Jesus is the one I know of first and best. I sing of the dancing pattern in the life and words of Jesus.”

Anyone who loves dancing – from *Strictly* to Scottish Country Dancing – will know that a dance has a shape to it, a pattern to follow, for the individual, the couple or the set, and often specific to a piece of music. For Carter, Jesus was the pattern he knew and trusted. This was the way into the Dance that mattered. And he leaves us with this thought:

Whether Jesus ever leaped in Galilee to the rhythm of a pipe or drum I do not know. We are told that David danced (as an act of worship) so it is not impossible ... Many Christians have regarded dancing as a bit ungodly ... The Shakers didn’t. [The tune of “Lord of the Dance” is based on a Shaker melody, “Simple Gifts”] Dancing, for them, was a spiritual activity.

Jesus, our “Lord of the Dance”. A dance, not from our imagination but from the heart of Christ. And I’m invited to join in the dancing pattern he sets down as my spiritual activity ... So let the music begin!

A prayer for today

“I’ll live in you if you’ll live in me; I am the Lord of the Dance,” said He.’ Amen to that!

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