

3rd June 2021

Imperfect

“Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect.”

Bible, Psalm 139:15

In a local church a while ago, we sang the great Scots' Paraphrase, *The Saviour died, but rose again*, one of my favourite hymns. Once again, I was moved to tears by this powerful affirmation of faith, based on the amazing testimony of St Paul in the eighth chapter of his Letter to the Romans. It was written – my hymn book informed me – by “John Logan, Leith”, for inclusion in *Scottish Paraphrases* published in 1781.

Rev John Logan was born in a farm in Soutra, near Fala in Midlothian, and was brought up in Gosford Mains, Aberlady. He became a minister of the Church of Scotland in 1770, and the following year was “presented” to South Leith Parish Church “for acceptance as their minister”. Logan was a writer of satirical dramas, and the congregation were unhappy having him imposed on them, though they failed in their protests. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland valued this man's literary skills and, in 1775, made him a member of the committee charged with “the revision and enlargement of paraphrases and hymns for use in public worship” – which went on to produce the *Scottish Paraphrases* mentioned above.

Logan's troubles weren't over, however, as his connection with the Arts continued to give offence to his parishioners. He also drank heavily, fathered an illegitimate son by a servant girl, went off to the fleshpots of London in 1781 for a time, made a second parishioner pregnant in 1785, and resigned from the ministry the following year. He continued to write poetry, drama, and even sermons – though he was accused later of plagiarizing some of the sermons he published as his own.

It seems remarkable to me that such a man as this, with all his imperfections, could write a paraphrase on a powerful passage of scripture that can still inspire people when they sing it two hundred and fifty years later. Yet, why should we be surprised? After all, if the Psalmist is right, and God knows how imperfect we are, might our faith not be that God can even yet make good things come from the flawed lives we live?

A prayer for today

*“Let troubles rise, and terrors frown, and days of darkness fall;
through him all dangers we'll defy, and more that conquer all.”*