

4th June 2021

Moved

EMOTION, *n.*

A prostrating disease caused by a determination of the heart to the head.

**It is sometimes accompanied by a copious discharge
of hydrated chloride of sodium from the eyes.**

Ambrose Bearce, The Cynic's Dictionary (1906)

I'm regularly moved singing hymns. A combination of a tune, a phrase and a feeling can leave me in tears. I'm not unhappy with that. Why should singing hymns not stir the soul? It happened in church a couple of weeks ago, sharing worship under strict "Covid Rules", which meant, of course, no singing. We used hymns, however, "on-screen" through *PowerPoint*, with recordings of a choir, congregation or praise-band singing, and the words projected for people to follow. I don't like it much, and I long for a return to full-on singing. But it was better than nothing.

We were using the paraphrase *The Saviour died, but rose again*, which I reflected on yesterday. I didn't expect to be moved, when I was hearing someone else sing and just reading the words. But I was. By verse two, my eyes were welling up. By verse four I was gone.

*Nor death, nor life, nor earth, nor hell, nor time's destroying sway,
Can e'er efface us from his heart, or make his love decay.*

These words from the pen of John Logan in 1781, echoing the testimony of St Paul nearly two thousand years before, had done it again. But this time, even though I wasn't singing, it was the tune that got me.

The tune traditionally used for this hymn is *St Andrew (Tans'ur)*. It comes from a selection of hymn tunes written by William Tans'ur in the 18th century. Tans'ur was an English music teacher, bookseller and hymn-writer in Warwickshire, who taught "psalmody" to young people. His *Compleat Melody or New Harmony of Zion* was published in 1764, his tune "St Andrew" being labelled "Tans'ur" to distinguish it from tunes of the same name by other composers.

So today I give thanks for John Logan's words, for William Tans'ur's tune *and* for tears of faith, rising up from a deep place in my heart.

A prayer for today

Lord, let my faith travel from my head to my heart, and when it bursts forth from the core of my being, let my emotion speak of my love for you. Amen

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