

13th July 2021

Guidance

“I had a voice from God, my help and guidance.”

Joan of Arc, Second Publica Examination (1431)

In his powerful book *Men Aspiring*, New Zealand mountaineer, Paul Powell, reflects on his quest for understanding the motivation of why people seek to climb mountains. He sums it up by saying that the motivation is as diverse as the people themselves and tells us that how men come to “maturity in the mountains” interests him “far more than peak-bagging.” Powell also includes the sobering personal account of the search for the crashed plane of a personal friend and fellow mountaineer, Christopher Johnson. Johnson had lost his life while searching for a missing climber. The site of the crash has never been discovered.

That’s why I was delighted to find in my anthology of *Psalms 23* – which I’ve reflected on recently – a version of “The Lord’s my Shepherd” by the same Christopher Johnson. It was written in 1953, the year Everest was conquered. I know nothing of Christopher Johnson’s journey of life, the context of his faith or whether he’s written anything else. But I *do* know that he’s used the metaphors of the mountains he loved to give us a new and helpful interpretation of this wonderful Psalm. “Maturity in the mountains”? If this is it, then, Christopher Johnson, I salute you.

*My guide is the Lord: he will not let me wander.
Through the deep rivers he holds firm my feet.
Up steep rock ridges his route will never falter.
He gives me courage in my time of need.
For all my journey, his Book is my route guide.
Life’s storms and thunder hold no fear for him.
His holding hands give strength and consolation.
In weather’s worst, his hut will take me in.
There he will treat my bruises, ease my stiffness;
His cup will comfort, and his food content.
Surely his guidance and his guard shall take me
Safe through my climbing days till Journey’s End.*

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A prayer for today

Mountains or valleys, climbs or gentle walks, yours is the guidance I need. Amen

An original reflection by @ Tom Gordon

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