

2nd February 2022

Confession

**“Draw near with faith ...
and make your humble confession to Almighty God.”**

Book of Common Prayer, Holy Communion, The Invitation (1662)

Coleshill is a market town in Warwickshire, taking its name from the River Cole on which it stands. I've never been to Coleshill, but since I was a small boy, I've loved the psalm-tune that carries its name.

The metrical psalm, *O thou my soul, bless God the Lord*, is based on a few verses from Psalm 103. It's been sung in Presbyterian worship for centuries, having first appeared in *The Scottish Psalter* of 1650, and is included in the 1929 version with which I was most familiar in childhood. *Coleshill* is the melody to which it is most often sung.

With its haunting minor or modal style, *Coleshill* fits perfectly with the searching confessional words of the Psalm:

*All thine iniquities who doth
most graciously forgive:
who thy diseases all and pains
doth heal, and thee relieve.*

The tune first appeared in "William Barton's *The Psalms of David in Metre* published in Dublin in 1706, and has been attributed to Thomas Smith, a Dublin musician. We're told in a 1698 advertisement that the psalters were "printed by J Brent and S Powell at the back of Dick's Coffee House in Skinner Row, and are to be sold by Peter Laurence at his shop in Bridge Street, near the Old Bridge, price (bound) 2s. 6d." Whatever the history, when I sang Psalm 103 to *Coleshill* as a child, I felt good.

"Confession is good for the soul". I don't know how much I had to confess as a small boy, and I had no clue what a soul was. But singing the psalm touched me with a good feeling. Forgiveness? God? I have no idea. But, thank God, that feeling has never left me. In faith, I still make my humble confession, and in *Coleshill* I am still blessed with forgiveness.

A prayer for today

*Who with abundance of good things
doth satisfy thy mouth;
so that even as the eagle's age,
renewèd is thy youth.*