

22nd December 2024 – Fourth Sunday in Advent

Singing

**“Come sing now, sing;
for I know ye sing well;
I see ye have a singing face.”**

Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, *The Wild-Goose Chase* (a play performed in 1621)

One of the rooms in our home is effectively a music-room. There are lots of instruments, a music-stand holding songbooks for voice and piano, a much-used Clavinova, a guitar-amplifier and a cupboard full of files and books of all types of music. It's clear what the Gordons do in their spare time!

Among it all, I have two copies of a songbook, *101 Scottish Songs*, one in the “music-room”, and the other (my mother-in-law's copy) in my study. First published in 1962, and with a foreword from the editor, Norman Buchan, a Scottish Labour MP from the mid-20th century, it's a fascinating collection of Scottish traditional songs: the familiar *Ae Fond Kiss* and *Scots, Wha Hae* by Burns; the traditional *Waly, Waly* and *Mormon Braes*; Glasgow Street Songs such as *If You Will Marry Me*, *Queen Mary*, *Queen Mary* and *Ma Maw's a Millionaire*; and many other songs people have been singing for generations, for personal pleasure, community entertainment, and to keep our Scottish musical heritage alive. Such songs are integral to my life.

Norman Buchan writes: “The one great debt that all of us interested in Scottish song owe, is to the thousands of ordinary people, pedlars, ploughmen, weavers, ‘the true and living minstrelsy of the Scottish people’, who have created our songs and kept them alive.”

It's no great leap as Advent moves us to its glorious conclusion, to give thanks for the “thousands of ordinary people” through centuries of Christendom who have given us Advent and Christmas songs to sing: some familiar, others refreshingly new; many known off-by-heart, others for choirs to surround us with beauty and wonder; some warm and deeply cherished, others challenging and disturbing; some belted out with joy, others that move us to tears. So, as I give thanks for *101 Scottish Songs* today, I also give thanks for hundreds of songs and hymns which guide me to Christmas.

If you “have a singing face” – or even if you don't – Andrew Fletcher's words are for you today: “Come sing now, sing; for I know ye sing well.”

A prayer for today

If I can sing well, that's my praise.

If I can't sing well, let my face and my heart do the praising for me. Amen