

COMMENT: HYMN – HEALING GOD

For years I taught and wrote much about the healing ministry. I always felt that 'healing' as many people saw it, i.e. physical cure, was only a **part** of the Gospel, and there was always a danger that 'healing' would eclipse the wider message of the Gospel itself. I was very pleased, therefore, when I had finished it to realise that I had dealt with physical cure in just three words, and that I had spent over 150 other words on God's wider dimensions of healing!

I wrote this hymn in the conviction that in some sense God's work **is always about our 'healing'** at one level or another. I grouped my thoughts around God in **Trinity**, with verse 1 focusing on the Father, verse 2 on the Son, and verse 3 on the Spirit, while ending each verse with a prayer. The first two prayers being prayers for unity, i.e. the healing of the Church.

It would have been easy to stop there, but I added a fourth verse. It is a reminder that God's healing work is not past, but is the task of us, the Church, today. The verses conclude with a quotation from the famous prayer of St. Francis which so many know, but, oddly, seem not to equate with the Church's healing ministry.

This was not written for a tune with healing associations. The tune for 'At even, ere the sun was set', was far too gentle and quiet for my purposes! I wanted a trumpet-declaration of God's work and our mission. I actually wrote it for 'Hyfrydol', but heard it for the first time in a cathedral sung to **Abbot's Leigh**, —and have wholeheartedly recommended their wise choice ever since!

The second verse was originally –

**Healing Christ, God's Word incarnate,
reconciling man to man;
God's atonement dying for us
in his great redemptive plan.**

'Man to man' was, of course, traditionally *inclusive* language, but is now thought by some to be exclusive regardless of the intention of the speaker or writer, or the context.

I'm honoured that the Women's World Day of Prayer is planning to use this hymn in 2002. The organisers wrote me a kind letter wondering if I had a version with non-traditional inclusive language. I hadn't. I re-wrote it for them, and this version avoids 'man to man'.

[See my article **POLITICALLY CORRECT – OUR FRIEND OR FOE?**]

[For those who are very concerned with style, I realise that in the second line I've placed my word 'history' where it requires three syllables, rather than the two as usually spoken. This, so I have been told, is not very good. The only way I have found of avoiding it is by re-writing the first four lines as follows –

**Healing God, Almighty Father,
everlasting and sublime;
yet you care for all your children
living in created time.**

Do feel free to use this if you prefer.]

HYMN: HEALING GOD

Suggested tune: 'Abbot's Leigh' (C.V.Taylor) 8.7.8.7.

1.

**Healing God, almighty Father,
active throughout history,
ever saving, guiding, working
for your children to be free.
Shepherd, king, inspiring prophets
to foresee your suffering role;
Lord, we raise our prayers and voices;
make us one and make us whole.**

2.

**Healing Christ, God's Word incarnate,
reconciling each to all,
God's atonement, dying for us,
his full rescue from our Fall.
'Jesus', saviour, healer, victor,
drawing out for us death's sting;
Lord, we bow our hearts in worship,
and united praises bring.**

3.

**Healing Spirit, Christ-anointing,
raising to new life in him;
help to poor; release to captives;
cure of body; health within.
Life-renewing and empowering
Christ-like service to the lost;
Lord, we pray 'Renew your wonders
as of a New Pentecost!'**

4.

**Healing Church, called-out and chosen
to enlarge God's kingdom here;
Lord-obeying; Spirit strengthened
to bring God's salvation near.
For creation's reconciling
gifts of love in us release,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
'Make us instruments of peace'.**