

2012/1 Another Anthem?

by BS Poh

During my school days I read the book “Exodus” written by American author Leon Uris, loaned to me by a friend in Singapore. I did not realize at that time that the book was banned by the Malaysian government, including the film based on it, which carried the same title. The Malaysian government supports the Palestinian cause, while the book is a war novel on the founding of Israel. While studying in the United Kingdom, I learned more of the film, Exodus, produced and directed by Otto Preminger. The soundtrack music, “The Exodus Song”, was written by Ernest Gold, with the lyrics written by the American singer, Pat Boone. I was struck, not only by the beauty, but also the by the power of the piece of music. The lyrics, of cause, was equally powerful, which those who support the Palestinian cause would associate with Zionism.

Years later, I brought my family to a circus in town. Our children were still young. The music that greeted us was “The Exodus Song”! I gasped, wondering if the words of the song would be sung. But no, it was the music only that was played. The years flew past when I began to wonder whether I could “redeem” the song by giving to it a clearly Christian content. I studied the lyrics by Pat Boone, and realized that the song focuses on the physical land of Israel and carries a strong sense of nationalism. The song is as follows:

*This land is mine, God gave this land to me,
This great and ancient land to me.
And when the morning sun
Reveals the hills and plains,
Then I see a land where children can run free .*

*So take my hand and walk this land with me,
And walk this lovely land with me.
Though I'm just a man,
When you are by my side,
With the help of God I know I can be strong.*

*Refrain:
To make this land our home,
If I must fight,
I'll fight to make this land our home,
Until I die, this land is mine.*

My understanding of the Bible is that the Old Testament land of Israel pointed to the kingdom of God, which is occupied by all who have repented of their sins and trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation (Heb. 4:1-2, 8-9; 11:-16; Rom. 4:16-18). Our struggle in the Christian life is basically a spiritual one. We are contending “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). The agents of Satan include the beast from the sea, the beast from the earth, and the great harlot, also

known as Babylon the Great (Rev. 13:1, 11; 17:1-6). These refer to persecuting authorities, false teachings, and worldly allurements. The Christian is constantly buffeted on every side – conflicts from outside, fears from inside (2 Cor. 7:5). Romans 8:18-39 speaks powerfully to the Christian of the Holy Spirit's help in his struggles, and of God's love in Christ, in his trials. The note of quiet triumph, of peace, and of certainty must be portrayed in the new song. There should be a call to come to Christ, in order to enter the kingdom of God, and not a geographical land. By August 2000, I produced this hymn, based on Romans 8:18-39, for singing to the tune of "The Exodus Song":

*My God is good, He gave me life in Christ,
This rich and blessed life in Christ;
Though at this present time,
Suff'rings and trials are mine,
They are as nothing compared to what will be.*

*2. So come with me and live this life in Christ,
And live this blessed life in Christ;
Let men their charges bring,
And woes of all kinds spring,
We know God is for us, who can be 'gainst us?*

*Refrain:
The Lord is my helper,
I will not fear,
He'll leave not nor forsake His own;
The Lord is King,
With Him I'll reign!*

*3. By His Spirit, God gave this hope to me,
This sure and precious hope to me;
And when this world is done,
When heav'n and earth are one,
I will hear the song of those from sin set free.*

*4. So take my hand and share this hope with me,
And share this precious hope with me;
Though trials from Satan flood,
And foes may spill our blood,
Yet in all these things we are more than conq'rors.*

This hymn was included in our hymn book, "Millennium Hymns", published in 2004. The music scores of the hymns were not included. In anticipation of an edition of the hymn book which includes the music scores, I wrote to Warner/Chappell Music Limited in London for permission to include that of "The Exodus Song". I had intended to put forward this hymn as the anthem for the Reformed Baptists, but thought it might be difficult for most male voices to cover the range of the notes. In 2010, the hymn "Jerusalem, city of God" was put forward as the anthem instead.¹ After some practice, we discovered that it is possible to sing "My God is good" quite comfortably by beginning with a lower pitch. In our recent church camp, the four teams of participants competed in singing this hymn.² The singing was judged on the melody, the harmony and the gusto.³ Boy, we had a good time!

I now put forward the hymn "My God is good" as another anthem of the Reformed Baptists. Our brethren of other communions are welcome to join us in singing this hymn. Please note that the

music is copyrighted and needs permission for reproduction in any permanent form for public use. For practice in singing, you might want to use the internet site listed below.⁴ Alternatively, you might want to use the video recordings of our church camp singing competition. Other recommended internet sites are listed below as well.⁵⁻⁷

Let us encourage one another with this song! Lets us sing to the praise of our God!

References:

1. See “A Reformed Baptist Anthem” under Articles of year 2010 at: http://www.ghmag.net/index.php?p=1_183_Reformed-Baptist-1689.
2. See the video report of the church camp (using the Password: ChurchCamp2012) at: <https://vimeo.com/43984314>.
3. See the Singing Competition 2012 (using the Password: Singing2012) at: <http://vimeo.com/44750323>.
4. This piano recording is perfect for learning to sing “My God is good”: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7ywCKQJcWI&feature=related>.
5. For sheer enjoyment, listen to this twin-piano rendering: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6wq0RB6wTU>.
6. For original singing of “The Exodus Song” by Pat Boone go to: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdT_0teZW_c.
7. For singing of “The Exodus Song” by Andy Williams, go to: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEYmomUuveU&feature=related>.

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