The Psalms and Spirituality as Reflected in Poetic Versions of the Twenty-third Psalm

by
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3U D\H U

*RG RI FUHDWLRQ LQILQLWH ZLVGRP DQG HQ
/RUG RI ORUGV
6KHSKHUG WR HYHU\ VKHHS
'UDZ XV LQWR \RXU IROG ±
1RW EHFDXVH ZH PHULW \RXU QXUWXUH DQG F
1RW EHFDXVH ZH DUH HQWLWOHG WR \RXU EOH
%XW IRU WKH UHDVRQ WKDW \RX DUH ZKR \RX
$QG ZH DUH ZKR ZH DUH ± \RXU QHHGIXO FKLO
*XLGH XV DQG GLUHFW XV LQ \RXU ZD\
7KDW ZH PD\ OLYH RXU OLYHV WR \RXU JORU\
$QG DW WKH ODVW VLQJ SUDLVHV LQ WKH OLJ
$PHQ

%LEOH IDOO RSHQ DW LWV KHDUW DQG WKHUH LW ZDV UH
D ORYLQJ DQG FDULQJ 6KHSKHUG D /RUG RI ULJKWHRXVQH
UHGHPSWLRQ 2I FRXUVH LW WRRN VRPH \HDUV RI OLYLQJ
P\ RZQ KHDUW DV , RSHQHG WKH %LEOH WKH 3VDOPV ZRX
SHUVRQDO GLDORJXH EHWZHHQ WKDW VDPH IDLWKIXO *RG
FRPSOLFDWHG ³PH ´

:KDW VHHPV WR VHW WKH 3VDOPV DSDUW IURP WKH UHV

$ P D V W H U L Q K L V R E V H U Y D W L R Q V R Q W K H 3 V D O

,VDDF :DWWV WKH $QJOLFDQ SUHDFKHU ZKRVH
³LPLWDWHG LQ WKH ODQJXDJH RI WKH 1HZ 7HVWDP
SVDOPRG\ DQG K\PQRG\ VDZ WKLV QHHG IRU FRQW
WKURXJK KLV WH[WV +H VDLG ³:KHQ ZH UHDG D S
VSHDNV WR XV :KHQ ZH VLQJ D PHWULFDO 3VDOP

,Q WKH FUDGOH \HDUV RI WKH (QJOLVK VSHDNL
3VDOP ³0DNH D MR\IXO QRLVH WR WKH /RUG D
WKH 6FRWVPDQ :LOOLDP .HWKH

ñAll people that on earth do dwell,
sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
him serve with fear, his praise forth tell,
come ye before him and rejoice.ò

3VDOP UHMRLFHV LQ WKH SURPLVH RI IRUJLY

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is
covered. Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no
iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

,Q WKH PHWULFDO YHUVLRQ E\ )UHG 5 $QGHUV
D UK\WKP WKDW VWDUWV RXU KHDUWV WR GDQFLQ

How blest are those whose great sin has freely been forgiven.
Whose guilt is wholly covered before the sight of heaven.
Blest those to whom our Lord God will not impute their sin,
Whose guilt has been forgiven, whose heart is true again.

&HUWDLQO\ WKHVH DUH H[FHSWLRQDO H[DPSOH
FDUHIXOO\ VFUXWLQL]HG IRU WKHLU LPDJHU\ DQG
ORFDO SDVWRUV FRXQWU\ VTXLUHV DQG KXPEOH
VXUSDVVHG WKHLU VNLOO 1RQH RI WKH JUHDW SR
ERRN RI 3VDOPV ZLWK WKH SRVVLEOH H[FHSWLRQ
DQG -DPHV 0HUULFN WKRXJK RQH FRXOG UHDVRQ
EH FRQVLGHUHG ³JUHDW SRHWV´ 0LOWRQ 'RQQH
FRPSRVHG D IHZ VHWWLQJV ± PRUH DV H[HUFLVHV
DQG WKHQ PRYHG RQ WR PRUH OLEHUDWHG FUHDW
E ð LOHQEHRHELSLWCZ pLVWDG Bp°HW€0GLHPS P pL @°0€
EQH ð0G5™cHÑ00•ÀO H V3@@À GU DJH G Gp0S4fHðU €yH
E€p
@pW•$Ð@ @°VÀQ KQÔ +P0•ÀF`W

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness,
for his name ¶s sake.
Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will feare no evil: for thou art with me,
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me,

) R U W X Q D W H O \ I R U X V , V D D F G L G Q ¶ W N H H S K L V

(Sing Watts ¶ Psalm 23 to the tune Resignation.)

My Shepherd will supply my need:
Jehovah is His Name;
In pastures fresh He makes me feed,
Beside the living stream.
He brings my wandering spirit back
When I forsake His ways,
And leads me, for His mer F \ ¶ake,
In paths of truth and grace.

When I walk through the shades of death
Thy presence is my stay;
One word of Thy supporting breath
Drives all my fears away.
Thy hand, in sight of all my foes,
Doth still my table spread;
My cup with blessings overflows,
Thine oil anoints my head.

The sure provisions of my God
Attend me all my days;
O may Thy house be my abode,
And all my work be praise.
There would I find a settled rest,
While others go and come;
No more a stranger, nor a guest,
But like a child at home.

,Q WKH WUDQVODWLRQ E\ $QGUHZ :DGGHO SXE
LPDJLQDWLRQ WR UHDG

Ye ravenous dogs, why do ye attack me to no purpose?

Envy, why dost thou push a wicked aim?

The Lord superintends me, as a shepherd his flock;

All I want in him I have:

Life, and health, and rest, and food,

All the plenitude of God.

,W LV RQO\ LQ WKRVH (QJOLVK YHUVLRQV ± SUL
WUDQVODWLRQV ± ZKLFK GHSULYH XV RI WKH DOOX
9XOJDWH RI 6W -HURPH XSRQ ZKLFK WKHVH WUDQ
ñDeus regit meò ï UHQGHUHG LQ WKH *ñRX D\ %LEOH RI ñ Our Lord rule th me, and nothing shall be wanting to me.ò*

%HJLQQLQJ LQ WKH HDUO\ V WKH FKXUFK H
DZDUHQHVV RI JHQGHU LQ ZRUVKLS HVSHFLDOO\ L
VLQJ DQG WKH SUD\HUV ZH RIIHU WR *RG ,QFOXV
LQ JHQHUDO EXW PRUH SDUWLFXODUO\ LQ WKH LP
FRQVWHUQDWLRQ DQG LQ VRPH FDVHV DOLHQDWL

2XU LPDJHV RI *RG DUH VR EDVHG LQ RXU FRQG
ODQJXDJH RI ZRUVKLS WKDW PDQ\ RI XV FDQ VD\ W
³-HKRYDK´ RU ³(ORKLP´ RU ³&UHDWRU ´ RU VD\ ZLW
PDNHWK PH WR OLH GRZQ LQ JUHHQ SDVWXUHV ´ ³I
³KH UHVWRUHWK P\ VRXO ´

2IWHQ LW LV RQO\ ZKHQ WKRVH PDVFXOLQH WH
EHFRPH REYLRXV RU HYHQ JODULQJ WR XV

God is my Shepherd, I shall not want.

God maketh me to lie down in green pastures;

God leadeth me beside still waters;

God restoreth my soul.

God leadeth me in the paths of righteousness

for God ¶ own nam H ¶ ake.

³(TXDO WLPH´ EHWZHHQ WKH JHQGHUV FDQ EH IHPLQLVW 3VDOPLVWV GHPRQVWUDWH IRU XV

0DUFKLHQH 9URRQ 5LHQVWUD LQYHHUXEVRRN

Swallow ¶Nest

Because El Shaddai shepherds me, my deepest needs are met.

She gives me rest in the green pastures of Her Word.

She leads me beside the still waters of prayerful silence.

She restores me, body and soul.

She leads me in the paths of wholeness.

$QG RYHU D GHFDGH ODWHU %DUEDUD 0RQGD UHYLVLRQV WKH 3VDOP IRU XV LQ WKHVH ZRUGV

Rejoice, Beloved Woman

My mother is my shepherd and I lack nothing.

She lays me down in green grass and carries fresh water to me.

3HUKDSV VRPHWLPHV LW PD\ EH HDVLHU IRU XV PRWKHU PRUH LQWLPDWHO\ WKDQ WR WKDW RI D V RQ WKLV VLGH RI WKH FURVV ZH GR KDYH WKH LP XV XQGHUVWDQG WKH SVDOPLVW¶V LQWHQW

$QRWKHU KXPDQ FRQFHUQ QHHGV WR EH DFNQR

ñThe Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.ò

&OLQW 0F&DQQ LQ KLV VWXGLHQWDXVHG XV W
FRQVLGHU KRZ WKLV UHODWLRQVKLS RI FDUH PD\
DFKHV RI KXQJHU EXUQLQJ WKLUVW DQG D GHKXF
JUDFH DUH DEVHQW &DQ WKH\ KHDU WKHVH ZRUG
VODXJKWHU"

&DUORV 9DOOHV D -HVXLW PRQN ZKR VXUYLYH
HQJDJHG LQ &KULVWLDQ PLQLVWU\ DQG HGXFDWLR
UHIOHFWV

I have watched flocks of sheep on green mountain sides.
They romp about, they graze at will, they loiter in the shade.
They have no sense of hurry, no agitation, no worry.
They don ¶even look at their shepherd; they know he is there
and he cares.
Yahweh, you are my shepherd.
If only I believe in that, my life will change.
My anxiety will go, my complexes will dissolve,
and peace will return to my troubled nerves.
I will be able to live from day to day, from hour to hour,
because he is there.
How great is the blessing of believing in Providence!

7KH SURYLVLRQV RI *RG EXLOGLQJ RQ WKH LP
WKH QH[W IHZ YHUVHV RI WKH 3VDOP

7KH .LQJ -DPHV WUDQVODWRUV HQOLJKWHQ XV
JUHHQ SDVWXUHV´ DQG EHLQJ OHG ³EHVLGH WKH V
UHVWRUH RXU VRXOV

$JDLQ 3KLOLS 6LGQH\ JLYHV XV

He rests me in green pasture his;
By waters still, and sweet,
He guides my feet.
He me revives; leads me the way,
Which righteousness doth take,
For his nam Hs ¶ake.

+HQU\ +DPPRQG FRQWLQXHV KLV H[SDQGHG WU
PRUH LQIRUPDWLRQ WKDQ HYHQ 'DYLG PLJKW KDYH
WKDW PDNHV WKH 3VDOP VLQJ WR XV

He provideth abundantly both for my food and refreshment. He revives and refreshes and comforts me by his spirit, affords me a full and plenteous bait, and thereby enables me for the hardship of a journey, and then leads me forth in the even paths of pious duties, gently and carefully, as I am able to go; by this means directing me to that true felicity even of this life, the exercising of myself, and guiding my steps by his excellent laws and rules of living; and this out of his free mercy to me, the

Lo, my Shepherd ¶ hand divine!
Want shall never more be mine.
In a pasture fair and large
He shall feed his happy Charge,
And my couch with tend ¶est care
ĂMidst the springing grass prepare.
When I faint with summer ¶ heat,
He shall lead my weary feet
To the streams that still and slow
Through the verdant meadow flow.

(YHQ WKRXJK 0HUULFN¶V YHUVLRQ ZDV VHW WR
FRQJUHJDWLRQ KLV SRHWU\ GLG OLWWOH WR LQV
<4gf0Y W A- Ç0c • 7 Q
0 V `Ä p+ H V K D3 K @ G 0 G L G !@LÙ

7KH PRVW SRZHUIXO OLQN EHWZHHQ WKH 2OG 7
LPDJH RI *RG ³SUHSDULQJ D WDEOH IRU XV LQ WKH
DPRQJ XV WRGD\ FDQ KHDU WKRVH ZRUGV DQG QR\
WKURXJK WKH EUHDG DQG WKH FXS KH VKDUHG ZL\
FUXFLIL[LRQ

7KH ELEOLFDO LPDJHV RI EDQTXHWV DUH PDQ\
*HQHVLV WR WKH PDQQD LQ WKH ZLOGHUQHVV IUR
ORDYHV DQG ILVK WR WKH ILYH WKRXVDQG WR -H\
GLVFLSOHV DIWHU WKH UHVXUUHFWLRQ

7KH ILUVW RI WKH PLUDFOHV -HVXV SHUIRUPHG
ZKHQ KH FKDQJHG WKH ZDWHU LQWR ZLQH

6HYHUDO \HDUV DJR , DFTXLUHG IRU P\ FROOHF
YHUVLRQ FDOOHG WKH ³3XULILHG 7UDQVODWLRQ ´
1HZ <RUN VWDWH ZKRVH PDLQ HPSKDVLV LV WHPSH
GLG ZKHQ WKH ERRN DUULYHG ZDV WR FKHFN WKH
ZKDW WKH\ GLG ZLWK WKDW SDUWLFXODU PLUDFOH

6XUH HQRXJK WKH\ KDG -HVXV WXUQLQJ WKH Z
ORQJ IRRWQRWH 7KH\ FODLPHG WKDW WKH RQO\ U
ZDV VR LQVLVWHQW $QG WKH UHDVRQ VKH ZDV VR
OLIH -RVHSK KDG GLHG 0DU\ KDG IDOOHQ RQ KDU
EXVLQHVV 6KH ZDV DFWXDOO\ WKH FDWHUHU IRU
UHVSRQVLEOH IRU WKH VKRUWDJH RI ZLQH

7KH QRWH ZHQW IXUWKHU WR VWDWH WKDW 0D
SDUWLFXODU PLUDFOH DJDLQ EHFDXVH VKH ZDV D
EHWZHHQ KHU DQG KHU SODFH DW WKH FURVV

, VKDUHG WKLV VWRU\ ZLWK RQH RI P\ FROOHDJ
UHPDUNHG ³:HOO , JXHVV DIWHU &DQD 0DU\ RQO

$QG ZKDW PRUH ³LPPDFXODWH UHFHSWLRQ´ FD
WKURXJK EDSWLVP LQWR WKH IDPLO\ RI *RG WKH

:H FDQ UHODWH RXU RZQ EDSWLVP ZLWK WKH D
DIILUP WKH ERXQGOHVV ORYH RI *RG LQ WKH RYHU
XV

$W YDULRXV WLPHV LQ WKH KLVWRU\ RI (QJOLV
³DEXQGDQW´ ³EULPIXO´ ³IXOO\ GLJKW´ ³UXQQLQJ
³FURZQHG´ ³FKHHUIXO´ ³VPLOLQJ´ ³JHQHURXV´ ³

%XW WKH FXS LV DOZD\V WKHUH DQG DOZD\V I
FDQ LPDJLQH

$QG LW LV LQ WKLV IXOILOOPHQW WKDW WKH 3
%UXHJJHPDQQ FDOOV ³QHZ RULHQWDWLRQ´ ZKHUH
SUHVHQFH RI *RG

Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days

If my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord

2YHU D SHULRG RI \HDUV VKH KDG SDUDSKUDVH
GHYRWLRQDO FRQWHPSODWLRQ DQG RQH 6XQGD\
PDQXVFULSW WR KHU PLQLVWHU DVNLQJ KLP WR U
WR LPSURYH LW

$IWHU UHDGLQJ D IHZ RI KHU YHUVHV KH UHDC
EHVW DQG UDWKHU WKDQ FRQIURQW KHU ZLWK KL
GUDZHU LQ KLV RIILFH DQG SURPSWO\ IRUJRW DER

7ZR \HDUV ODWHU DIWHU WKH VHUYLFH 0DUJD
WKH PDQXVFULSW KH KXPEO\ FRQIHVVHG ³7KHUH
EHWWHU ´

As faithful shepherds tend their flocks,
So God will care for me;
And from God ¶ s store of grace my needs