

Thought for the day – 7th December, 2020

'Come, Thou long-expected Jesus'

I have chosen this advent hymn as it seems to me to be the embodiment of all that is Advent. Needless to say, as an organist, I find all the Advent hymns enjoyable and each one has much to say.

Charles Wesley (1707 – 1788) wrote the hymn in 1744 basing it on Haggai 2 v7 'what is desired by all nations will come' and a prayer he wrote at that time. The tune varied. It wasn't until 1887 that this tune 'Cross of Jesus' appeared in a revised edition of 'Hymns Ancient and Modern'. It was written by Sir John Stainer (1840 – 1901) who had been appointed organist of St Paul's Cathedral in 1872 and whilst there had been asked to join the editorial team for the revision. One of his best known works was 'Crucifixion' (1887) which includes the tune 'Cross of Jesus'. This may be the only hymn book where it is the set tune.

In Advent we **look forward** and **wait** for the anniversary of Jesu's birth. What do we **hope** for? What was the Jewish race **hoping** for? Why was Jesus **born**? The answers to these questions would be long and doubtless involved but the beauty of this hymn is that it answers all of them in the space of 4 four-line verses. So here is a great hymn written by an outstanding theologian with a tune from an outstanding composer from the same period.

The hymn therefore that covers the time from His birth to when He comes again. A stirring hymn that has strong words and a strong tune.

It will be sung more than once during Advent in all our churches but I attach the links giving two different approaches to this hymn:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEEduWnDGs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kljDULGyyDg>

I hope you will enjoy listening to them.

Richard Wilson (St Chad's)