

The Lord's My Shepherd: Stuart Townend (1996)¹

Visualisation: Polydirectional

Analysis: In favour of this being polydirectional, we may cite the original psalm. Yet the original setting may have been antiphonal, and anyway its pattern of speech is not ours. Whether or not the CEV is justified in its approach to the psalms, it at least shows the way that lyricists should go—monodirectionalism. Thus, visualisation is faulty, confusing prayer. Stuart has modified a tradition song, removing the more obvious archaisms. Yet newbies will doubtless wonder what heads 'anointed' (der?) with oil, and overflowing cups, as well as *feasting on his delights*; actually mean.² Stuart could have done a little more modernising: how does the original setting translate into our words, and into our covenant setting? It took me years to understand that the shepherd I shall not *want* didn't mean that I didn't want the shepherd! I note without deduction.

Even on the lyricist's site, it is *Lord*, not LORD, so implies a Jesus song: Jesus is lord. In 1650 Francis Rous got it right; in 1996 Stuart Townend got it wrong—theologically the West is on a Sabellian slide. Soft unitarianism excludes the trinity. The new covenant upgraded our knowledge of God, and to downgrade to trusting in *Jesus* alone, from the Sinaitic covenant's more secure trusting in *Yahweh* alone, fails the grade (if anyone, Yahweh is the father, not the lord). Nor, for that matter, did Sinai teach even that: *trust alone* should always add context. I can trust my wife alone to cook my next meal (granting some basic givens, such as the food, availability of heat, her mortal wellbeing and closeness), and God alone to grant me physical immortality. To the extent that by singing it we promise never to trust—though may still desire—another human being, it falls at least into soft hermitude. However, if we disengage brain when singing, all should be well.

Unlike Rous and the psalmist, Stuart sandwiched a theme of God's house (stanza 2), within two pastoral slices (stanzas 1&3), mixing themes instead of progression from first to next. Even so, it might be better to keep a song to only one of these themes.

Finally, there is an implied boast. Stuart has spiritualised the psalmist's setting of human enemies, to the diabolical enemy. Fine, but there is a difference between not *needing* to fear, and boasting that I *will* not fear.³

Suggestions: Replace *the Lord's*, by *you are*; *want*, by *lack*; *he/his* (throughout), by *you/your* (and any following word changes as needed); swap positions of stanzas 2&3; *trust in You alone*, by *trust in you, Yahweh/father*; *will not fear*, by *need not fear*; *on your pure delights*, by *as a special guest*.

BAG	A	B	C	D	E	F	G ^{1,2}	H ^{1,2}	I	J ^{1,2,3}	K	L	M	Total	Grade
	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	60	-	24	8	-	12	-8	E

¹ www.stuarttownend.co.uk/song/the-lords-my-shepherd

² I once heard about a beautiful young women who, in combined prophesying from God's perspective with a touch of sageism: "come unto me, all you young men, and I will give you the delights of your hearts". We can be misread!

³ Yet *I will trust* does not carry this boast, since it is of reliance, even though we cannot know (unless elected to Calvinism) whether we *will* rely on God.

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A = Mixed Themes (-4); B = Incompletism (-4); C = Archaism (-8);

D = Blessing God (-4); E = Buddy or Boyfriend (-4); F = Polytheism (-8); G = Voxdeism: Soft (-24), Hard (-48);

H = Unitarianism: Soft (-60), Hard (-72); I = Misdirection (-12); J = Misvisualisation: Soft (-12), Mid (-24),

Hard (-36); K = Boasting (-8); L = Decontextualising (-8); M = Hermit Harakiri (-12)