

March 13, 2022

In the Cross of Christ I Glory

Sir John Bowring (1792-1872) was a distinguished scholar, ranked by some as one of the great minds of his day in the English-speaking world. Among his gifts was his ability as a linguist, publishing translations of poetry from such varied languages as Russian, Batavian, Spanish, Polish, Serbian, Bohemian, Magyar, Czech and Hungarian. He was also a social progressive, advocating free trade, parliamentary reform, education for all and prison reforms, according to hymnologist Albert Bailey.

Bowring also was twice a member of Parliament, a consul at Canton (in charge of trade in China) and a governor of Hong Kong. He was evidently relieved of his duties in Hong Kong because he “was full of conceit and without any very clear idea of political principles on a large scale.” Mr. Bailey notes that some suggest that Bowring’s policies and poor relationships with the Chinese contributed in part to the second Opium War (1856-1858)—a situation that led to the Chinese putting a price on his head. Even after retirement in 1860, his public service continued as a commissioner to Italy and other diplomatic posts in Europe and Hawaii.

“In the cross of Christ I glory” (1825) was composed while the author was in his early thirties. Late 19th-century hymnologist John Julian suggests that Galatians 6:14 provides the basis for this hymn: “Far be it for me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (KJV). British hymnologist J.R. Watson notes that the “image [of a cross] is a fine one . . . it allows the reader to glimpse the Cross standing over a ruined universe: into the Cross are drawn all the emotions, the woes of life, the good moments of light and love, so that both are ‘sanctified’.”

This “sublime” cross (mentioned in the opening and closing stanzas) is a wonderful oxymoron, and as Mr. Watson points out, “an important word in the Romantic period . . . [making] this hymn a splendid example of hymnwriting in the age of Blake and Wordsworth.” It is one of the paradoxes of Christianity that an instrument of torture becomes a symbol of faith for all time where “All the light of sacred story/Gathers round its head sublime.”

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Psalm 27

¹ The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?

**The LORD is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?**

² When evildoers assail me
to devour my flesh,
my adversaries and foes
shall stumble and fall.

**³ Though a host encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war arise up against me,
yet I will be confident.**

⁴ One thing I asked of the LORD,
that will I seek after:
**that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the LORD,
and to inquire in his temple.**

⁵ The Lord will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
will conceal me under the cover of his tent,
and will set me high on a rock.

**⁶ And now my head shall be lifted up
above my enemies round about me;
and I will offer sacrifices in the Lord’s tent
with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the LORD.**

⁷ Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud,
be gracious to me and answer me!

**⁸ “Come,” my heart said, “seek the Lord’s face!”
Your face, O LORD, I seek.**

⁹ Hide not your face from me.
Turn not your servant away in anger,
for you have been my help.

**¹⁰ Cast me not off, forsake me not,
O God of my salvation!
If my father and mother should forsake me,
the LORD would take me up.**

¹¹ Teach me your way, O LORD,
and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.

**¹² Give me not up to the will of my adversaries;
for false witnesses have risen against me,
and they breathe out violence.**

¹³ I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living!

**¹⁴ Wait for the LORD;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the LORD!**

Philippians 3:17 – 4:1

¹⁷ Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. ¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹ whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. ²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

4 Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

St. Luke 13:31-35

³¹ On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, “Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.”

³² And He said to them, “Go, tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third *day* I shall be perfected.’ ³³ Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the *day* following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.

³⁴ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen *gathers* her brood under *her* wings, but you were not willing! ³⁵ See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until *the time* comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ ”

The Long Haul

Thanks You!

To our friends at Faith United,

We just wanted to thank you guys so much for providing meals for our team. It’s people like you who show God’s love by generosity that make this trip possible. You heard about a spring break service trip filled with college students who needed help and you said yes to our ask. There are people on our trip who don’t know God and we get to show them God’s love even if they don’t know it’s God’s love. So thank you, thank you, thank you!

Your friends at Encounter Campus Ministry and
the long haul