

CHURCH MOUSE

My cousin Alfie dropped in the other day seeking a quiet refuge from the hustle and bustle of up-town Bobcaygeon.

As usual during our light conversation he came up with a serious observation when he remarked that he was surprised that when some people die they request that there not be a funeral or any kind of gathering in their memory. I opined that it may be they felt that their lives were so fruitless and in vain that there was nothing for people to remember about them. I also said that funerals are not for the deceased but for us who must struggle on with living. Funerals give us the opportunity to experience a time of reflection, remorse and reverence.

Modern society seems to avoid these three R's, likely because there is no commercial benefit from them. Sometimes my cynicism even surprises me! Some of the modern churches avoid reflection, remorse (for sins) and reverence during their regular services. Instead they focus on the happy dance of ego and self esteem building, in an effort at making the congregation feel good about themselves. The idea that the burden of your sins have been borne by Christ and that this

transfer brings you into a closer and more intimate relation with Christ, leaving you with a feeling of gratitude and reverence for God, is an old fashion belief system.

Another thing I have observed about funerals is that it gives the deceased or their families a chance to choose the hymns that have touched them deeply during their lives. One such hymn is "How Great Thou Art".

Rev. Carl Boberg wrote the original Swedish version in 1886 after being caught in a sudden and violent midday thunderstorm followed by sunshine and a calm stillness interrupted only by the singing of birds. His poem was later fit to an old Swedish melody. Manfred von Glehn translated the poem into German and in 1925 Rev. E. Gustav Johnson from Chicago made an English translation from the original Swedish text which is quite different from the present version.

In 1927 I. S. Prokhanoff translated the German version into Russian. Rev. S.K. Hine and his wife learned of the Russian version while evangelizing in the Ukraine. They translated the first three verses into English in 1933 after an unforgettable experience in the mountains while crossing

into the Sub-Carpathian Russia. In 1939 the Hines had to return to England with the outbreak of WW2. The fourth verse was written after the war and having lived through the Blitz.

The hymn came to public attention in 1951 when Beverly Shea sang it during a Billy Graham crusade in London at the Harringay Arena. It was rated the most popular hymn in 1974 by the Christian Herald magazine.

The title "How Great Thou Art" has shades of a question rather than a statement. Let us make it a question and see where that takes us. "How Great Art Thou" and personalize by adding "to me?" Now we have perhaps the most important question that you will ever have to answer. What are the limits you put on God? How far is He allowed to influence and guide your daily life? How much credit for the majesty of nature can you ascribe to Him? What are the limits of miracles that He can perform? How you answer this question will determine how you live your life here on earth and your closeness to Christ throughout eternity. Pray to God that you will have His wisdom to answer the question to the benefit of yourself and all the lives that you touch.



*your quiet servant
Churchmouse*