

23rd January 2021

Awesome

**“O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy pow’r throughout the universe displayed.”**

Carl Boberg, How Great Thou Art

My mother responded to a call to faith at the Billy Graham rallies in the Kelvin Hall in Glasgow in the early 1950s. Integral to her response was the music of the crusades, particularly the choirs under the guidance of the Cliff Barrows and Beverley Shea. I suspect that Presbyterian Scotland had never heard the likes of this before, and the tartan-covered songbook from these crusades became one of my mother’s treasured possessions.

Her favourite hymn was “How great Thou art”, the first verse of which is quoted above. Written by a Swede, Carl Boberg, in 1885, this hymn still has the power to stir souls. Boberg was heading home from a meeting when he was caught in a violent thunderstorm. The lightning flashes and the thunderclaps were awesome, he said. After the storm, a rainbow appeared, and, surveying the scene from the tranquillity of his home, Boberg wrote a nine-verse poem in praise of his God: *O store Gud*, “O Great God.” Twenty-two years later, the poem was translated into German – *Wie gross bist Du*, “How great Thou art” – and then into Russian (*Насколько ты большой*) by I. S. Prokhanoff, known as the “Martin Luther of modern Russia”. In time, it was translated into English by Stuart K Hine in the form familiar to us now and set to the original Swedish tune which Hine arranged appropriately for the purpose.

Simply put, this hymn of praise is about the “I/Thou” relationship with God of which I wrote about yesterday. Here is the “I” that is you and me standing before the “Thou” that is the nature of God and, “in awesome wonder”, offering the worship God deserves from us.

I can say no more. Boberg’s poem of praise and Hine’s translation say all that needs to be said. “My God, how great Thou art”.

A prayer for today

*“Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art.”*

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