

CROWN HIM WITH MANY CROWNS

Matthew Bridges & Godfrey Thring

It was difficult finding information about this hymn from my usual evangelical sources, - I could only find brief ‘generalities’ ... and then I discovered why ...

By way of introduction ... The first six verses of this hymn were written in 1851 by Matthew Bridges¹ (1800-94) and six more verses were added in 1874 by Godfrey Thring² (1823-1903), an Anglican minister who was born in Somerset. It was sung to the tune ‘Diademata’ written by a renowned English cathedral organist and composer, Sir George Job Elvey (1816-93). Out of the four verses we have in *Mission Praise*, the first and last were written by Bridges, and Thring wrote the other two. In *Christian Hymns* Bridges wrote five out of the six verses.

Matthew Bridges was born in Essex into a committed Church of England family. He began his career as an author in 1825 with the publication of his poem, ‘Jerusalem Regained’³. He was somewhat antagonistic towards Roman Catholicism in a book he wrote entitled “The Roman Empire Under Constantine The Great”⁴ (1828). However, he came under the influence of John Henry Newman (Hymn – “Lead, Kindly Light, amidst the encircling gloom”).

John Henry Newman belonged to the ‘high-church’ (‘Anglo-Catholic’ ‘Oxford Movement’) tradition within Anglicanism. This was a group of Anglicans who wanted the Church of England to return to Roman Catholic doctrines and liturgy. John Henry Newman subsequently left the Anglicans to become a priest in the Roman Catholic Church in 1845 and some years later was created a cardinal by Pope Leo XIII. ... Sadly, Matthew Bridges was influenced by Newman and he also converted to Romanism, in 1848. He lived for a few years in Quebec, Canada before returning to live in a home on the estate of the Convent of the Assumption, in Sidmouth, Devon ... and it is there he died and was buried in the convent’s graveyard.

Matthew Bridges wrote seventeen hymns, - of which the majority are excellent, - but the following sadly indicates where he ended up ... it is entitled “Rose of the Cross” ... Here is what he wrote ...

Rose of the cross, thou mystic flower!
I lift my heart to thee;
In every melancholy hour ...
O Mary! O Mary! Remember me!

A wanderer here, through many a wild,

Where few their way can see,
 Bloom with thy fragrance on thy child,
 O Mary! Remember me!

Queen of all virgins, look on me,
 And listen to my Litany.

How could anyone write such beautiful and powerful words as those contained in the hymn, “Crown Him with many crowns”, while being enveloped in a religion which elevates Mary to such a deified position, - he wrote “Crown Him with many crowns” three years *after* he *converted* to Roman Catholicism ... a religion which teaches a salvation by works through the Roman Church ... a religious institution which denies the true Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Before I discovered this information, this was one of my favourite hymns. It speaks in glorious terms about “the Lamb upon His throne”, and the plan of God “before the worlds began”, and how the Lord Jesus “triumphed o’er the grave, and rose victorious in the strife for those He came to save”. ... But the reason I could not find information in evangelical Christian sources concerning Matthew Bridges was because he had embraced another gospel, and Paul made it clear, **Gal. 1:8** *But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.* ... Paul also counselled Timothy, **I Tim. 4:16** *Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine ... and to the Corinthians he confessed his own fears, I Cor. 9:27* *But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway ... I Cor. 10:12* *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall ...* And Peter also cautioned his readers, **II Peter 1:10** *give diligence to make your calling and election sure ...* And remember too how Jesus warned *His* disciples, **Mt. 24:4** *Take heed that no man deceive you.*

One of the greatest dangers has always been the deception of the well-polished respectable error. Beginning in the Garden of Eden with a seemingly innocent conversation regarding a religious matter, the serpent gently drew Eve into questioning God’s grace, **Gen. 3:1** *And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?* ... The moment those words slid out of those evil lips, Eve should have *banished* the serpent, - she should have driven him away immediately, - for the serpent was challenging the instruction of God. There should have been no more conversation, no more discussion.

God's Word is truth and it is the irrefutable standard by which His people are to live and believe. Nothing needs to be added or edited for Jesus said, **Mt. 24:35** Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Rather than linger with the sad story behind the author of this hymn, let's consider the words from Scripture upon which it is said to be based, **Rev. 19:12** His eyes were as a flame of fire, and *on his head were many crowns*.

In the 17th and 18th chapters of the Book of Revelation the once-powerful and influential Babylon has been destroyed. ... In chapter five there is the *Redemption Song*, **Rev. 5:9** And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast *redeemed* us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; **10** And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. ... And now in chapter nineteen it is the '*Hallelujah Song*', **Rev. 19:1** And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, *Alleluia*; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God ... There is great praise in Heaven.

Then in v.5, a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. **6** And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, *Alleluia*: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. **7** Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. **8** And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

Understandably, John is enraptured by what he sees, and as he continues to watch, the glory intensifies ... **11** I saw heaven opened, - in Rev. 4:1 he recorded, *After this [the observing of the seven churches] I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven ... just a door ... but here now in chapter 19, he sees heaven opened, - ... not just a door, nor a window of Heaven ... but Heaven itself is opened and there is nothing being held back! ... and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. 12 His eyes were as *a flame of fire* ... Go back to Rev. 1:14 and you'll see Who this is, **Rev. 1:14** His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire ... **13** And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, - this is the Lord Jesus ... and on his head were many crowns ... Before coming into this world as a little baby, **Phil. 2:6** being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: **7** But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: **8** And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

For at Calvary, on His head was the crown of thorns, but when he rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven where He is now seated at His Father's right hand, and "The head that once was crowned with thorns, is crowned with glory now" ... **Heb. 2:9** But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

As very God He has always owned the highest glory and honour, - He has *always* been the unrivalled all-powerful, all-ruling, all-sovereign King ... but He gained a *new* glory and a *new* honour through His work of redemption for sinners on the cross ... and He carried those new crowns of victory and triumph He had won at Calvary into Heaven for His coronation, described in Revelation chapter five. He ascended into Glory the perfect Man, the perfect Saviour, and the perfect God, **Ps. 24:7** Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. **8** Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle ... **Col. 2:9** in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

It is as this King of Glory He will return to earth to reign for the one thousand years spoken of in Rev. 20. When He comes, He will *smash* every opposition for He will have the final triumph and victory over all rebellion against God ... crowned with even *more* crowns, **Zech. 14:3** Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. **4** And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south ... **Is. 40:15** Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing ... **17** All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity ... **24** Yea ... and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.. ... This is what Jesus told His disciples about it, **Mt. 24:29** Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: **30** And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ... It will be unmissable! And Paul wrote, **II Thess. 1:7** when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, **8** In flaming fire [*Rev. 19:12*] taking vengeance on them that know not God ... And John, **7** Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and

all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. ... That is the fulfilment of what is promised, **Rev. 19:10** for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy ... **16** And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. ... And He will restore His Father's order.

When He comes in Glory, He will transform the earth and, - wrote Lewis Sperry Chafer, - He will change "the shadow of darkness and sin to the ineffable light of His glory". ... That is how it is will be when Jesus comes back to reign, **Is. 2:4** He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more ... **11:4** with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked ... **6** The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. **7** And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. **8** And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. **9** They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

He will have won every crown of authority and pre-eminence ... and it will be the joy of the Redeemed to cast their crowns at His feet for He alone is worthy. ... Almost at the beginning of a sermon Spurgeon preached on these words, and on his head were many crowns, he said to his congregation, "I pause here, overcome by the majesty of the subject, and instead of attempting to describe that brow, and those glittering crowns, I shall act the part of a seraph, and bow before that well-crowned head, and cry, Holy, holy, holy, art thou Lord God of hosts! ... and unto thee be glory for ever and ever". (<http://archive.spurgeon.org/sermons/0281.php>)

Despite the sad account of Matthew Bridges ... we are not elevating a man, but we are uplifting our Lord and, therefore, we can confidently conclude our study with the closing words of the hymn,

All hail, Redeemer, hail!
For Thou hast died for me;
Thy praise and glory shall not fail,
Throughout eternity.

¹ Written by Matthew Bridges (1851):

Crown him with many crowns,
 The Lamb upon his throne;
 Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns
 All music but its own:
 Awake, my soul, and sing
 Of him who died for thee,
 And hail him as thy matchless king
 Through all eternity.

Crown him the Virgin's Son!
 The God Incarnate born,--
 Whose arm those crimson trophies won
 Which now his brow adorn!
 Fruit of the mystic Rose
 As of that Rose the Stem:
 The Root, whence mercy ever flows,--
 The Babe of Bethlehem!

Crown him the Lord of love!
 Behold his hands and side,--
 Rich wounds, yet visible above,
 In beauty glorified:
 No angel in the sky
 Can fully bear that sight,
 But downward bends his burning eye
 At mysteries so bright!

Crown him the Lord of peace!
 Whose power a sceptre sways,
 From pole to pole, - that wars may cease,
 Absorbed in prayer and praise:
 his reign shall know no end,
 And round his pierced feet
 Fair flowers of paradise extend
 Their fragrance ever sweet.

Crown him the Lord of years!
 The Potentate of time,--
 Creator of the rolling spheres,
 Ineffably sublime!
 Glassed in a sea of light,
 Where everlasting waves
 Reflect his throne,--the Infinite!

Who lives, - and loves - and saves.

Crown him the Lord of heaven!
 One with the Father known,--
 And the blest Spirit, through him given
 From yonder triune throne!
 All hail! Redeemer, - Hail!
 For Thou hast died for me;
 Thy praise shall never, never fail
 Throughout eternity!

² Written by Godfrey Thring (1874):

Crown him with crowns of gold,
 All nations great and small,
 Crown him, ye martyred saints of old,
 The Lamb once slain for all;
 The Lamb once slain for them
 Who bring their praises now,
 As jewels for the diadem
 That girds his sacred brow.

Crown him the Son of God
 Before the worlds began,
 And ye, who tread where He hath trod,
 Crown him the Son of man;
 Who every grief hath known
 That wrings the human breast,
 And takes and bears them for His own,
 That all in him may rest.

Crown him the Lord of light,
 Who o'er a darkened world
 In robes of glory infinite
 His fiery flag unfurled.
 And bore it raised on high,
 In heaven--in earth--beneath,
 To all the sign of victory
 O'er Satan, sin, and death.

Crown him the Lord of life
 Who triumphed o'er the grave,
 And rose victorious in the strife
 For those he came to save;

His glories now we sing
 Who died, and rose on high.
 Who died, eternal life to bring
 And lives that death may die.

Crown him of lords the Lord,
 Who over all doth reign
 Who once on earth, the incarnate Word,
 For ransomed sinners slain,
 Now lives in realms of light,
 Where saints with angels sing
 Their songs before him day and night,
 Their God, Redeemer, king.

Crown him the Lord of heaven,
 Enthroned in worlds above;
 Crown him the king, to whom is given
 The wondrous name of Love,
 Crown him with many crowns,
 As thrones before him fall.
 Crown him, ye kings, with many crowns,
 For He is King of all.

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[http://explore.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?frbrVersion=3&tab=s=moreTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=BLL01014805946&indx=7&recIds=BLL01014805946&recIdxs=6&elementId=6&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=3&frbg=&&dscnt=0&scp.scps=scope%3A%28BLCO NTENT%29&vl\(2084770704UI0\)=any&tb=t&vid=BLVU1&mode=Basic&srt=rank&tab=local_tab&dum=true&vl\(freeText0\)=Matthew%20Bridges%20&dstmp=1549799288437](http://explore.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?frbrVersion=3&tab=s=moreTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=BLL01014805946&indx=7&recIds=BLL01014805946&recIdxs=6&elementId=6&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=3&frbg=&&dscnt=0&scp.scps=scope%3A%28BLCO NTENT%29&vl(2084770704UI0)=any&tb=t&vid=BLVU1&mode=Basic&srt=rank&tab=local_tab&dum=true&vl(freeText0)=Matthew%20Bridges%20&dstmp=1549799288437)

4 <https://archive.org/details/romanempireunde00bridgoog>