

Thy Glory, Lord, the Heavens Declare

James Montgomery (1771–1854)

Thy glory, Lord, the heavens declare,
The firmament displays Thy skill;
The changing clouds, the viewless air,
Tempest and calm Thy word fulfill;
Day unto day doth utter speech,
And night to night Thy knowledge teach.

Though voice nor sound inform the ear,
Well known the language of their song,
When one by one the stars appear,
Led by the silent moon along,
Till round the earth, from all the sky,
Thy beauty beams on every eye.

Waked by Thy touch, the morning sun
Comes like a bridegroom from his bower,
And, like a giant, glad to run
His bright career with speed and power—
Thy flaming messenger, to dart
Life through the depth of Nature's heart.

While these transporting visions shine
Along the path of Providence,
Glory eternal, joy divine,
Thy word reveals, transcending sense—
My soul Thy goodness longs to see,
Thy love to man, Thy love to me.

ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

Favorite Places

Kevin T. Bauder

Five months ago, I began a series of essays on my favorite things. I won't be surprised if you've forgotten. But I'll reproduce the opening paragraph, which took the form of an announcement.

Let me give fair notice. I intend to begin a series, written only now and then, naming my favorite things. Some of these things are directly religious in nature: my favorite theologians, for example. With others, the connection may not be as obvious (my favorite mystery writers or my favorite calibers). But it is always a mistake—a bad one, too!—to segregate “spiritual” from merely “secular” loves. We live life as a whole, and all of life should be lived as devotion to God. This is just as true of favorite calibers and pasta dishes as it is of favorite commentaries or Bible versions.

This announcement was followed by a two-week listing of my favorite authors. Then the series went dormant (as promised) when I began to study the Christology of John 1. But now the time has come for another installment. This time I want to write about my favorite places.

But before I do, I need to clear up some confusion. I'm writing about favorite places to *visit*, not necessarily favorite places to *be*. My favorite place to be is wherever Debbie happens to be located at that moment. I would rather be with her than anywhere else in the world. I also prefer to be at home, by which I mean that domicile that Debbie and I inhabit.

Furthermore, by *visit* I mean more than, say, a shopping trip. I like to visit bookstores (especially used bookstores). I like to visit gun shops and shows. I like to visit restaurants and to attend concerts and recitals. But those don't count toward this list. What I mean is more like favorite places to go sight-seeing or to spend time.

My main criteria for a place I love to visit are threefold. The first is outstanding architecture. The second is significant history, whether ecclesiastical, political, or cultural. The third is natural beauty. I almost never find all three together, so I've chosen most of my favorite places based on one or two criteria. Some lesser criteria also enter the picture, as you'll figure out.



In the Nick of Time is published by Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

Permission is granted to duplicate for personal and church use.

www.centraseminary.edu | info@centraseminary.edu
900 Forestview Lane N, Plymouth, MN 55441 | 800.827.1043

For the combination of all three main criteria, I can think of no better place than Paris and its environs. One city offers the Sorbonne, the Basilica of Saint-Denis, the Cathedral of Notre Dame, the Louvre, the Orsay Museum, and the Palace of Versailles, as well as secondary spectacles like the Arc de Triomphe and the Eiffel Tower. Paris is within a morning's drive of other locations such as the Fontainebleau Palace, Chateau Chambord, or the Cathedral of Chartres. Paris is an expensive town, but for humanly-constructed beauty, it cannot be surpassed.

Much less expensive and only slightly less spectacular is Budapest. The Danube provides natural beauty. The Fisherman's Bastion, the Citadella, the Parliament building, and Buda Castle are all architectural marvels. Saint Stephen's Basilica is a study in neo-classical excellence, while Matthias Church is a little gem of late Gothic architecture. Budapest also offers secondary beauties like Vajdahunyad Castle and Hero Square with its two art museums. All these sites can be accessed via Budapest's excellent subway system. A bonus is the authentic gulyás served in the local restaurants.

I've visited other European cities that deserve mention. These include Vienna with its marvelous Schönbrunn Palace, including its gardens, fountains, and memorials, and Salzburg with its high castle, its "Sound of Music" cathedral, and Mozart's birthplace. I very much enjoyed visiting Zwingli's Grossmünsterkirche in Zurich but accidentally wandered through the Red Light district trying to find it. For sheer charm, nothing can compare with Rothenburg ob der Tauber, a nearly intact medieval village outside Nuremberg.

On the opposite side of the world, I have greatly enjoyed three places in Brazil. The first is Rio de Janeiro, of course. The city is most famous for its beaches, but it also features some striking architecture such as the municipal theater and the palace at the Ilha Fiscal. The Royal Portuguese Reading Room is one of the most impressive libraries in the world. The "Christ the Redeemer" statue and the Sugar Loaf Mountain are both impressive in their own right, and both provide wonderful viewing points for all Rio.

A second Brazilian favorite is the Foz du Iguaçu at the southern tip of the country. In this place, natural beauty predominates. It features one of the world's most amazing waterfalls, supplemented by colorful birds and butterflies. The waterfall is located on the border of Brazil and Argentina, and it is worth viewing from both sides. Nearby, a foot bridge spans the river and crosses into Paraguay.

While it might not be everyone's favorite, I also loved the city of Manaus. Located where the Rio Negro and the Solimões join to form the Amazon, Manaus is surrounded by the world's largest rain forest. The city offers some outstanding architecture, especially the opera house. A visit would not be complete without a river trip to view the "marriage of the waters." The

charming Iricema Falls is only a couple of hours to the north and is worth a side visit. As in any Brazilian city, a stop at a good churrascaria is mandatory.

One other city that I liked very much is Singapore, which is also its own island republic. The mix of cultures in Singapore is truly astonishing. There is obvious Western influence, but the city has a robust China Town and a Little India that feels authentic. Public transportation is cheap and reliable, and the city is far safer than most American cities of similar size. It enjoys a tropical climate, and it is filled with beauty, color, and activity.

By now you've noticed that I haven't mentioned anything in North America. Most of my favorite places in North America are not cities, but some are. And the ones that aren't are truly amazing. I'll talk about my favorite North American places in the next *In the Nick of Time*.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
