

O sacred head, now wounded

ARNULF OF LEUVEN (ca. 1200–1250)

trans. into German by PAUL GERHARDT (1607–1676)

trans. from German by JAMES W. ALEXANDER (1804–1859)

Oh sacred Head, now wounded!
With grief and shame weighed down;
Now scornfully surrounded
With thorns, thy only crown:
Oh sacred Head, what glory,
What bliss till now was thine!
Yet though despised and gory,
I joy to call Thee mine.

Oh noblest brow and dearest,
In other days the world
All feared when thou appearedst;
—What shame on thee is hurled!
How art thou pale with anguish,
With sore abuse and scorn,
How does that visage languish,
Which once was bright as morn!

Thy cheeks once “fair and ruddy,”
Thy lips, whose balmy breath
Was heavenly and gracious,
Are now despoiled by death.
For ghastly death has taken
My Saviour’s strength away,
And how thou seem’st forsaken
In this thy woful day.

What thou, my Lord, hast suffered,
Is all for sinners’ gain:
Mine, mine was the transgression,
But thine the deadly pain.
Lo here I fall, my Saviour!
’Tis I deserve *thy* place,
Look on me with thy favor,
Vouchsafe to me thy grace!

Receive me, my Redeemer,
My Shepherd make me thine;
Of every good the fountain,
Thou art the spring of mine.
Thy lips with love distilling,
With milk of truth sincere,
With heaven’s bliss are filling
The soul that trembles here.

Here, where I find salvation,
My place oh let me take;
Nor drive me from my station
Ev’n when thy heart-strings break.
Ev’n when thy face is paling
In death’s last agony,
With arms of faith unfailing
Oh let me cling to thee.

The joy can ne’er be spoken
—Above all joys beside,
When in thy body broken
I thus with safety hide.
My Lord of life, desiring
Thy glory now to see,
Beside thy cross expiring
I’d breathe my soul to thee.

What language shall I borrow
To thank Thee, dearest Friend,
For this thy dying sorrow,
Thy pity without end!
Oh make me thine forever,
And should I fainting be,
Lord let me never, never
Outlive my love to thee.

If I, a wretch, should leave thee,
Oh Jesus leave not me;
In faith may I receive thee,
When death shall set me free.
When strength and comfort languish,
And I must hence depart,
Release me then from anguish,
By thine own wounded heart!

Be near when I am dying,
Oh show thy cross to me!
And for my succor flying,
Come Lord, to set me free.
These eyes new faith receiving,
From Jesus shall not move;
For he who dies believing,
Dies safely—through thy love.

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