

FOR YOU MAKE ME **GLAD** BY YOUR DEEDS,

O LORD;

I SING FOR **JOY** AT THE WORKS OF YOUR

HANDS.

P S A L M 9 2 : 4

Redeemer Lutheran Church
66325 M 152 — Dowagiac, MI 49047

WOMEN IN HYMNODY

INTRODUCTION

The following sketches were written in the fall of 2000 and spring of 2001 for the Redeemer Lutheran Church Ladies' Group, Sister Lakes, Michigan. They are compiled here in one booklet for ease of reading and study.

Thanks be to God for the poetry brought to our worship through the hymn-writers presented here!

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

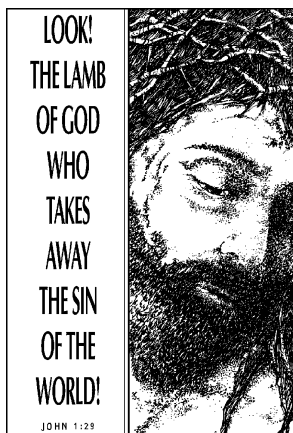
Colossians 3:16

Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee
O Lamb of God, I come, I come

Just as I am and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come

At first, the poem was published anonymously, leading to an interesting exchange between the author and her doctor. Lying in a hospital room, the doctor came to Charlotte one day and gave her a leaflet with the text of *Just as I Am* printed inside. The doctor had no idea she was the author. He said that copies of the poem were being sold and the money was being given to St. Mary's Hall (the college for girls that she had wanted so much to help the year before). She wept tears of joy when she realized that she *had* been able to contribute to the effort. There are many anecdotes and stories concerning this hymn. It has been used by missionaries throughout the world for the clear and simple way it portrays our Savior who has washed away all our sins by His death on the cross.

Charlotte Elliott died on September 22, 1871 and is buried at St. Andrew's Church in the village of Hove, Sussex, England.



ANNE STEELE (1717-1778)

Introduction

Some forty years prior to the American Revolution, the hymns of Anne Steele were being written. She represents one of the first women to compose original hymn texts in the English language.

Biographical Highlights

Anne Steele was born in Broughton, Hampshire, England in the year 1717. Her father, William Steele, worked in the timber industry but was also a part time lay minister in the Baptist Church (where he served without pay).

From early on, the Lord saw fit to send trials into Anne's life. In 1720, her mother passed away at the age of 36. From that time on, Anne was raised by her stepmother. Twelve years later (1732) she was baptized, but shortly thereafter in 1736 more tragedy struck. She fell off a horse and badly injured her hip, making her an invalid the rest of her life.

The final blow, however, came in 1737. She was engaged to be married to a man named Elscourt. The preparations were made for the wedding. The guests had begun to arrive and all were awaiting the arrival of the groom. Instead, a messenger came and informed everyone that Elscourt had drowned that morning while swimming in the Avon River. She had lost her fiancé just hours before they were to be married. Anne was never engaged again.

The Hymns Begin

Some have been in Anne's situation and become angry with God for allowing such things to happen. Yet the Lord was using these trials to strengthen her trust in Him and to prepare her for the great service she would do for

For further thought: The hymn contains many Scriptural allusions.

- 1) John 1:29; the last line of every verse
- 2) 2 Corinthians 7:5; verse 3 lines 2-3
- 3) Luke 4:18; verse 4 lines 1-2
- 4) Ephesians 2:14; verse 6 line 2

the whole Christian Church.

Although she seemed to show an interest in literature at a very early age, up to this point Anne had not written anything beyond simple poems for her friends. At the loss of her beloved, however, it seems as though her heart opened up and she began pouring out her sorrows, prayers, praises, and thanksgivings to God on paper. After Elscourt died, she wrote the following verses:

Father, whatever of earthly bliss	Give me a calm and thankful heart,
Thy sovereign will denies,	From every murmur free;
Accepted at Thy throne, let this	The blessing of Thy grace impart,
My humble prayer, arise:	And make me live to Thee.

Let the sweet hope that Thou art mine
My life and death attend,
Thy presence through my journey shine,
And crown my journey's end.

As the years went on the output of hymns and poetry continued to grow. Finally in 1757, twenty years after the death of Elscourt, preparations were made to have her work published. Her father had been encouraging her for a long time to publish her writing and he noted happily in his diary dated November 29, 1757 that "This day Nanny sent a part of her composition to London to be printed. I entrust a gracious God, who enabled and stirred her up to such a work, to direct in it, and bless it for the good and comfort of many!"

Her work indeed served for the good and comfort of many. In 1760, *Poems on Subjects Chiefly Devotional* was made available under the pen name Theodosia. By the time of its third printing it contained 144 hymns, 34 metrical Psalms, and 30 short poems. Not surprisingly, much of her poetry dealt with the topics of death, earthly suffering, and eternal life in Christ.

In 1769 William Steele passed away. That same year, the Bristol Hymn-book of Ash and Evans (an early Baptist hymnbook) included some of Anne's hymns for the first time. Following that publication, her work became well known throughout England.

For further thought:

- Many of the hymn writers we have studied in this series have had physical ailments of some kind and were invalids much of their lives. For example, the most prolific poet in history— Fanny Crosby with 9,000 hymns— was blind from birth.
- Do you think that their ailments actually helped them write the words they did?
- How can our own troubles encourage us to turn to our loving God and His Son Jesus Christ? What is our *natural* reaction when facing hard times?
- What does Romans 5:1-5 have to say about the difficulties we face in this life?

"JUST AS I AM, WITHOUT ONE PLEA"

It was 1836 when Miss Elliott penned the hymn that has been a favorite of Christians ever since. In that year her brother and other members of her family were invited to help with a fundraiser to build a college in Brighton for the daughters of poor clergymen. Much to her disappointment, Charlotte's health would not permit her to be actively involved with the project. As she thought about how she could help, she remembered the words of César Milan years earlier and also the text of John 6:37, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."

During her first year as an invalid, César Mdan came to visit her. Mdan was a noted evangelist from Geneva, Switzerland. Seeing her sick and discouraged, he told her, "You must come just as you are, a sinner, to the Lamb of God that takes away all sin." From that day on, a friendship developed between Mdan and Elliott that lasted some 40 years. It was largely through Mdan's Christian witness that Charlotte came to know and love her Savior most intimately.

Now confined to her rooms at Westfield Lodge in Brighton, she turned her attention toward spiritual writings, especially poetry.

The subjects of her poetry, as you might expect, concern the troubles of this life and the glory that is ours in Christ Jesus who forgives all sin. It has been said that, "more than a half century of suffering went into the making of Miss Elliott's hymns."

About her physical condition she wrote,

"My heavenly father knows, and He alone, what it is, day after day, and hour after hour, to fight against bodily feelings of almost overpowering weakness and languor and exhaustion, to resolve, as He enables me to do, not to yield to the slothfulness, the depression, the irritability, such as a body causes me long to indulge, but to rise every morning determined on taking this for my motto: 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.'"

With the help of her brother, much of her poetry was published in the following five titles:

- *The Invalid's Hymn Book* (1834-1841)
- *Psalms and Hymns for Public, Private, and Social Worship* (1835-1848)
- *Hours of Sorrow* (1836)
- *Hymns for a Week* (1839)
- *Thoughts in Verse on Sacred Subjects* (1869)

In 1808 her hymns were published in the United States for the first time and have enjoyed popularity to this day. In 1908 one critic said, "Among Baptist hymn-writers Miss Steele stands at the head, if we regard either the number of her hymns which have found a place in the hymnals of the last 120 years, or the frequency with which they have been sung . . . they are almost uniformly simple in language, natural and pleasing in imagery, and full of general Christian feeling."

Anne Steele died on November 11, 1778 (age 61) and was buried in the same village where she had been born. It is reported that her last words were "I know that my Redeemer lives." On her tombstone are these words:

"Silent the lyre, and dumb the tuneful tongue,
That sung on earth her great Redeemer's praise;
But now in heaven she joins the angelic song,
In more harmonious, more exalted lays."

In the *Lutheran Hymnal* Anne Steele's work is represented by the following:

- 141. Enslaved by Sin and Bound in Chains
- 281. The Savior Calls; Let Every Ear
- 284. Father of Mercies, in Thy Word
- 363. To Our Redeemer's Glorious Name
- 579. Almighty Lord, Before Thy Throne

Religious Views

Miss Steele was born and raised Baptist. In general, this church does not follow Scriptural teaching on Baptism and the Lord's Supper. You may have noticed that Anne was not baptized until she was 15. The church holds that children must reach a certain age before they are to be baptized. This reflects a misunderstanding of what baptism really is. The Bible calls it a "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Tit 3:5). Through baptism, God gives forgiveness of sins which is for *everyone*. That is why Jesus told His disciples to baptize "all nations." Baptism is something that God gives to us, not a law that we must fulfill for God. With the Lord's Supper, the Baptists generally understand the bread and wine to be only *symbols* of Christ's body and blood. Yet Jesus said very clearly, "Take eat . . . this *is* my body . . . Take drink . . . this *is* my blood." We don't understand how

(or in what form) Christ's body and blood is together with the bread and wine in communion, but that is what God's Word says we are receiving.

Although the Baptists have these difficulties, they do confess and trust in Christ as their Savior from sin. They are a Christian church and there is every indication that Anne Steele too believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and was saved!

To our Redeemer's glorious name Awake the sacred song,
Oh, may His love immortal flame, Tune ev'ry heart and tongue!

Dear Lord, while we adoring pay Our humble thanks to Thee,
May every heart with rapture say, "The Savior died for me!"

For Further Thought

Read Deuteronomy 8:11-20. What does v16 say about the reason God allowed hardship to come to the Israelites?

What tests does the Lord allow into your own life? How have they made you stronger? Have they driven you toward His Word?

What do Acts 2:38-39 and 1 Peter 3:21 say about the power of Baptism?

CHARLOTTE ELLIOTT (1789-1871)



The last in our series of Women in Hymnody comes to us once again from England. Unlike some others, Charlotte Elliott did not write a tremendous amount of hymns (around 200), nor are her hymns exceptionally popular today—with the exception of two: *Just as I Am* (LH 388) and *My God, My Father, While I Stray* (LH 418).

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The year was 1789 and spring was just around the corner when Charlotte Elliott was born on March 18th to her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Elliott. She came from some rather well-known ancestors. Her grandfather was Rev. Henry Venn who was a popular minister in the Church of England. Rev. Venn had supported William Wilberforce, the famous English politician and abolitionist.

There is not much information available concerning Miss Elliott's childhood. She did have a brother, H. V. Elliott, who became a minister in the Church of England. In her young adult years she entertained herself by writing humorous poetry and developed an interest in music and art. She was unusually well educated for a woman of her day.

Her youthful vigor was not to last, however. In 1821, at the age of 32, she was struck with serious illness. The last fifty years of her life she lived as an invalid. She moved from Clapham (where she was born) to Brighton, England.



One of the striking things about the hymn *Beneath the Cross of Jesus* is the great number of references and allusions to Scripture within the text. Look at the following Bible verses and see where they find expression in the hymn:

Isaiah 32:2 _____

Psalms 63:1 _____

Jeremiah 9:2 _____

Isaiah 28:12 _____

Isaiah 4:6 _____

Matt 11:30 _____

Matt 27:36 _____

Gal 6:14 _____

With the help of God, may our words and thoughts echo those of stanza three:

I take, O cross, thy shadow
 for my abiding place;
 I ask no other sunshine than
 the sunshine of His face;
 content to let the world go by,
 to know no gain nor loss,
 my sinful self my only shame,
 my glory all the cross.



FRANCES JANE "FANNY" CROSBY (1820-1915)

Much of our familiar Christian hymns have come to us by way of England— often through women such as Katherine Winkworth and Anne Steele. Here in Fanny Crosby, however, we have an American to show us that the Lord was blessing His people with gifted talent in the new world as well. She wrote nearly 9,000 hymns, making her the most prolific hymn writer of all time.

Biographical Sketch

1820 March 24th marked the beginning of life for Frances Jane Crosby. She was born in a small one-story cottage near New York City. Tragedy came to her early. When she was six weeks old she caught a slight cold in her eyes. The family doctor was not in town at the time, so another country doctor was called in to prescribe treatment. The man was completely incompetent. He recommended that hot mustard poultices be applied to the infant's eyes. The result was permanent blindness, although she would never harbor any resentment toward the man who had ruined her sight. She said instead, "Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition, it would have been that I should have been born blind. . . because when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior."

1825 Still praying that her child could regain her sight, Fanny's mother took her to the best eye specialist in the country, Dr. Valentine Mott. Many friends and relatives helped pay for the visit. Nevertheless, the doctor pronounced the verdict that she would never see again. What bothered Fanny most, however,

was the fact that she might not be able to get an education like other children.

1828 Her first recorded poetry (on the subject of her blindness):

"O what a happy soul and I!
Although I cannot see,
I am resolved that in this world,
contented I will be.
How many blessings I enjoy,
that other people don't.
To weep and sigh because I'm blind,
I cannot and I won't!"

Two great blind poets of history, Homer and Milton, were to be joined by another, Fanny Crosby. Fanny would later become known as the "Hymn Queen" and the "Blind Poetess."

1829 The Crosby family moved to Ridgefield, CT. Since her mother had to work to support the family, Fanny spent a lot of time with her grandmother. Grandma introduced the young girl to the Bible and she began to read the Scriptures feverishly. Blessed with an amazing photographic memory, it is documented that Fanny could recite from memory the Pentateuch, the book of Ruth, most of the Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and much of the New Testament.

1835 An exciting announcement is made that Fanny's mother was able to send her to a special school, the Institution for the Blind in New York City. On March 3rd the journey was made from Ridgefield by stagecoach and boat. During her years as a student, she wrote more and more poetry. Although her teachers did not particularly encourage her, many others did. One day a Dr. Combe of Boston came to visit the students. Of her he said, "And here is a poetess. Give to her every possible encouragement. Read the best books to her and teach her the finest that is in poetry. You will hear from this young lady someday." Poetry she would write.

Passion

ST. CHRISTOPHER. 7. 6. 8. 6. 8. 6. 8. 6.

ELIZABETH C. CLEPHANE, 1830-1869

FREDERICK C. MAKER, 1844-1927

1. Be - neath the cross of Je - sus I fain would take my stand,
2. Up - on that cross of Je - sus Mine eye at times can see
3. I take, O cross, thy shad - ow For my a - bid - ing place;

The shad - ow of a might - y rock With - in a wea - ry land;
The ver - y dy - ing form of One Who suf - fered there for me;
I ask no oth - er sun - shine than The sun - shine of His face;

A home with - in the 'wil - der - ness, A rest up - on the way,
And from my strick - en heart with tears Two won - ders I con - fess:
Con - tent to let the world go by, To know no gain nor loss,

From the burn - ing of the noon - tide heat, And the bur - den of the day.
The won - ders of re - deem - ing love And my un - wor - thi - ness.
My sin - ful self my on - ly shame, My glo - ry all the cross. A - MEN.

the joy of looking toward the cross—the sorrow that it was our sins that put Jesus there; and the joy that it was there that Christ took them away.

Elizabeth Cecilia Douglas Clephane was one of the few women hymn writers of Scotland. She was born in Edinburgh in 1830, the daughter of the county sheriff. She grew up in a loving home with her father, mother, and two sisters. Following the death of her father, Elizabeth moved to the village of Melrose, about 30 miles southeast of Edinburgh where she spent the rest of her (short) life.

Elizabeth was the “frail” member of her family. Throughout her life she fought various health problems of her own, which only seemed to lead her to give a considerable amount of her time to the poor and needy in her community. She became known as “The Sunbeam of Melrose” for the joy and laughter she brought to the people. She and her sisters worked hard raising money for local charities and giving of their own financial resources. At one point they even sold their horses and carriages to help a particularly needy family.

Along with helping the poor in body, however, she also helped the poor in spirit through her poetry. Elizabeth Clephane enjoyed writing poems for her friends and relatives and had about eight of them published anonymously (and posthumously) in a Scottish Presbyterian magazine called the *Family Treasury*.

Only two of her hymns survive today, both of which have become quite popular in Christian circles. One is titled *The Ninety and Nine*, and the other, that famous Lenten hymn mentioned earlier— *Beneath the Cross of Jesus*.

Beneath the Cross of Jesus was written in 1868, just one year before Miss Clephane died. It was published in the *Family Treasury* three years later in 1872. Her original hymn contained five stanzas, but most hymnals include only the three printed on the next page. The tune, “St. Christopher,” was composed specifically for this text in 1881 by Frederick Charles Mcker (1844-1927). Mr. Mcker was an accomplished church organist and music teacher in Bristol, England.

- 1843** At the age of 23, Fanny was invited to speak before the United States Congress on behalf of her school. (The school was seeking federal funding to continue its work.) She paid tribute to Congress in a poem and then began paying tribute to the Lord by reciting poems about the care of her loving Savior. Among those present to hear her address were such notables as John Quincy Adams and Jefferson Davis. It is said that her words were so moving that there was scarcely a dry eye in the room when she was finished. After this, she began to make friends with many of the great political and religious leaders of her day. During her lifetime she was personally acquainted with all the presidents except George Washington (John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, James K. Polk, Zachary Taylor, Millard Fillmore, James Buchanan, Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson, Ulysses Grant, Rutherford Hayes, James Garfield, Chester Arthur, Grover Cleveland, Benjamin Harrison, William McKinley, Teddy Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, Woodrow Wilson). She enjoyed especially close friendships with Van Buren, Harrison, Tyler, Polk, and Cleveland. Many of the presidents came to visit the Institute for the Blind.
- 1844** Her first book was published— *The Blind Girl and Other Poems*.
- 1847** Fanny became an instructor at the Institute.
- 1851** Attending a revived service in New York City, Fanny devoted her life and work to the Lord. She became a faithful member of St. John’s Methodist Episcopal Church in New York City.
- 1858** March 5th saw her married to Alexander VanAlstyne. It was a happy marriage that would continue until his death 44 years later. Alexander was a gifted musician who would write tunes for his wife’s many hymns. By the time of her marriage, she was already well known as a writer of religious poetry.
- 1864** She was under contract with her publisher (Bigelow & Main Co.) to write three hymns per week. They began to use pen names for her so that their hymn collections did not appear to

be written by only one person! Altogether, Fanny Crosby wrote under more than 200 pen names.

1864-1909 These years marked the majority of her hymn-writing. She was an emotional poet who tried to write clearly and powerfully so children could understand. She also wrote many devotional (prose) books during these years.

1910 She declared, "My love for the Holy Bible and its sacred truth is stronger and more precious to me at ninety than at nineteen."

1915 On February 11th in the evening she penned her last lines in a note of comfort to a sorrowing friend whose daughter had recently died. "You will reach the river brink, some sweet day, bye and bye." Fanny went to be with the Lord herself just hours later at about 3:00am on February 12th, just short of her 95th birthday. She was buried in Bridgeport, CT.

Religious Views

Fanny Crosby was a member of the Methodist Church most of her life. Although she placed undue emphasis at times on her "day of conversion" and was subject to other influence from the Reformed churches, she knew and trusted in the Lord Jesus for salvation.



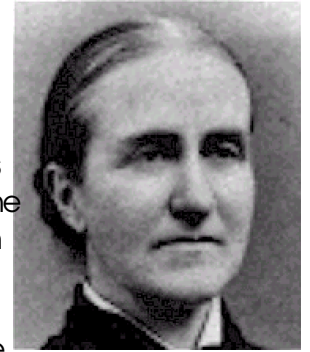
Fanny Crosby in her study

Famous Hymns

Her two most famous works are *Safe in the Arms of Jesus* and *Blessed Assurance*. In a poll taken of the favorite Christian hymns of all time, *Blessed Assurance* ranked highly at number twelve. Unfortunately, none of Crosby's hymns are represented in *The Lutheran Hymnal*.

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of his spirit, washed in his blood.
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.

ELIZABETH CLEPHANE (1830-1869)



Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene (Jn 19:25).

What would it have been like to stand there at the foot of the cross with Jesus' mother, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene? Yet one might say that during the season of Lent we all stand by the cross of Jesus. In spirit we have gone back to Jerusalem the past few weeks and heard again the crowds shouting that Jesus be crucified. We have seen Pilate wash his hands in that famous gesture of thoughtlessness and expedience. Each year we consider again what the Passion of our Lord means—what the cross means.

We "stand beneath the cross of Jesus" gazing up at His terrible sufferings not because we are compelled to do so, but because of what Jesus gave to us there on Calvary.

Because of the cross we have confidence.
Because of the cross our sins are forgiven.
Because of the cross we love one another.
Because of the cross we enjoy freedom from eternal death.
Because of the cross we proclaim it.
Because of the cross we can face God.
Because of the cross _____ .
Because of the cross _____ .

As Christians, our hope and joy, our strength and happiness is centered in the cross just as the Apostle Paul said to the Corinthians, "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

It was Elizabeth Clephane who once wrote a Lenten hymn titled *Beneath the Cross of Jesus*. Her words expressed both the sorrow and

ANNA MAGDELENA MEYER

On November 14, 1867, Anna was born to Georg and Otilie Plehn in Alt-Ruednitz, Neumark, Germany. Her father had been the teacher of a Lutheran School there since 1859.

In 1869, Georg resigned from his position and moved his family to America. He entered the Missouri Synod Seminary at St. Louis and was received into the pastoral ministry in 1871. The family moved to Lake Ridge, MI, and then to Tecumseh, MI, where he served congregations for short periods before accepting a call to a congregation in Chippewa Falls, WI where he served for 22 years.

It was at Chippewa Falls that Anna received her schooling, first at a Christian Day school and then at the local high school— after which she taught high school for a number of years. She married a pastor by the name of Christian Meyer on July 25, 1893, in Howard, SD. They lived in Nebraska, Illinois, and Wisconsin as he served different congregations.

During this time Anna Meyer wrote hymns that were primarily published in church periodicals. One of her translations from the original German appears in *The Lutheran Hymnal*. Written by one of the founding fathers of the Missouri Synod, C. F. W. Walther, it is Hymn 198 *He's Risen, He's Risen, Christ Jesus, the Lord*.

He's risen, He's risen, Christ Jesus the Lord;
He opened death's prison, the Incarnate Word.
Break forth, hosts of heaven, in jubilant song,
And, earth, sea, and mountain,
the psalm prolong.



SARAH FULLER FLOWER ADAMS (1805-1848)

LOVE O Love! thou makest all things
even
In earth or heaven;
Finding thy way through prison-bars
Up to the stars;
Or, true to the Almighty plan,
That out of dust created man,
Thou lookest in a grave,
—to see Thine immortality!



A DELICATE LIFE

Sarah Flower Adams is another in the long line of English women who have had a noticeable influence on Christian poetry and hymn writing even down to the present day. She was born on February 22, 1805, at Harlow, Essex, England. Her father, Benjamin Flower, was a journalist and politician. Her mother Eliza died in 1810, but not before giving birth to another daughter (also named Eliza).

Sarah and Eliza were blessed with gifts that complemented each other: Eliza was a musician, and Sarah was a poet. As you might expect, one would write words and the other would put them to music.

In 1834, Sarah married William Bridges Adams, a civil engineer and an inventor. His work took them to London where they would live— and separated Sarah from her sister. Nevertheless, the two remained very close.

Unfortunately, both daughters had inherited the "weakness" of their mother. They were both frail young ladies and often given to bouts of sickness. Once in London, Sarah had hoped to pursue a career in acting, but her health would not permit it. Around 1837 she was able to play Lady Macbeth on stage, but

that was all. As her acting ability faded, she began to focus more on her writing and became a good friend of the well known English poet Robert Browning.

In 1841, her five act dramatic poem *Vivia Perpetua* was published. It was a poem about the early Christian martyrs. In 1845 another book, *The Flock at the Fountain* was made available to the public. She also wrote a children's catechism and some hymns. Sarah Adams did not have the same volume of work as some of the other hymnists (e.g. Anne Steele or Frances Havergal) but one that she wrote has become as famous as any in the world.

Poor health was finally to claim the lives of Sarah and her sister Eliza. In 1846, Eliza was struck with tuberculosis and her sister rushed to her bedside to help. It was a long illness until Eliza passed away in December, and it proved to be too much for Sarah who contracted the disease as well. On August 14, 1848, she passed away at St. Martin in the Fields, Middlesex, England. At both Eliza's funeral and Sarah's, the hymns sung were by them—the words by Sarah and music by Eliza.

“THE” HYMN

THE WORDS— As mentioned earlier, Sarah Flower Adams was to write one hymn that would live in the minds and on the lips of millions after her. The hymn was *Nearer, my God, to Thee* (LH 533) written in 1841.

Whether it was the struggles with her own health that prompted her to pen the famous lines, we do not know for sure. It is not likely, however, that such events weighed heavily on her mind when she wrote it. At the time, Sarah and her sister were busy writing and compiling music for a new hymn book. They worked at the request of their Unitarian pastor, William J. Fox.

One day Fox was talking with the sisters about his sermon for the next Sunday. He was preaching on Genesis 28:10-22, the story of Jacob's dream at Bethel. Eliza suggested that Sarah write the story into verse, another hymn for the hymn book. In

have been written on my way to and from church and to and from work. I utilize my lunch hours for typing the hymns and keeping up correspondence. I used to do quite a bit of writing on Sunday afternoons, but now we have a Laymen's Hour in our church at that time, and I do not like to miss it. I also attend our Fundamental Bible lectures, Jewish mission-meetings, and the like. Still I find a minute here and there in which to jot down some verse.”

Her output of hymns grew, and a collection was published under the title *Songs of the Church Year*. In 1930, the *American Lutheran Hymnal* included eight of her hymns.

You can find Anna Hoppe's work in *The Lutheran Hymnal*:
#88 *This Night a Wondrous Revelation* (translated)
#419 *O'er Jerusalem Thou Weepest*

Independent Study

For a home devotion during Lent, read Lk 19:41-48 and then see how Anna put those words into verse in Hymn 419.



Several published collections of Jane Leeson's are known today. If you ever see one of them in a used book store, buy it! Copies are rare:

Infant Hymnings and Hymns and Scenes of Childhood, 1842
The Child's Book of Ballads, 1849
Songs of Christian Chivalry, 1848
Paraphrases and Hymns for Congregational Singing, 1853

Works of hers of which we would be more familiar include TLH 191 *Christ the Lord is Risen Today* (translated by Leeson from the Latin); and TLH 627 *Gracious Savior, Gentle Shepherd*.

Independent Study:

Jane Leeson claimed at times to be speaking by the Holy Spirit when she wrote her hymns. In what sense could you say that she was speaking by the Holy Spirit? In what sense would you say that she *probably was not*? See if these passages help you come to your conclusions: 2 Pet 1:16-21; Jn 17:17; 1 Cor 12:3; 1 Jn 4:1; 1 Cor 12:1-12; 2 Cor 4:6.

ANNA BERNADINE DOROTHY HOPPE

On May 7, 1889, Anna Hoppe was born to parents Albert and Emily in Milwaukee, WI. Early in her childhood she wrote patriotic verses, but at the age of 25 she began to dedicate her talents to writing spiritual poetry.

Lutheran in her theology and a member of the Wisconsin Synod, religious periodicals such as the *Northwestern Lutheran* began to print her hymns. (The *Northwestern Lutheran* is the Wisconsin Synod's equivalent of the CLC *Spokesman*.)

She was basically self-educated. Her formal training included only grade school. She entered a business office and had a few months of training at evening classes. Nevertheless, she worked hard at her jobs and at her hymns. Amid the hustle and bustle of modern life she wrote, "Many of my hymns

Jacob's dream at Bethel, he saw the angels of God going up and down a ladder to heaven. Sarah took from that the thought of being "close to God" and wrote these words:



The Titanic

Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me,
Still all my song shall be, Nearer my God, to Thee,
Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee.

Tho' like a wanderer, The sun gone down,
Darkness be over me, My rest a stone,
Yet in my dreams I'd be Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee

Four years after the text was first published in England, it made its appearance in the United States as part of James Freeman Clarke's *Disciples' Hymn Book* published in Boston.

THE TUNE— It is a bit unclear whether or not Eliza wrote a tune for these words of her sister's. In England, it was sung to melodies by John B. Dykes and Sir Arthur Sullivan. In 1859 the compilers of a new hymnbook asked Lowell Mason to write a new melody. He wrote the tune *Bethany* which has been used for it ever since.

THE STORIES— There are some interesting stories associated with this hymn. The first and most "mysterious" involves the *Titanic* disaster of 1912. On April 14th of that year the huge British passenger liner struck an iceberg and sank while on her way to New York. Over 1,500 lives were lost. It was reported by some of the survivors that the ship's band was playing Sarah's hymn *Nearer, my God, to Thee* as the ship went down. Although agreement is not unanimous by any means (other survivors report hearing other music, hence the

"mystery"), this hymn is the one that has been attributed to the *Titanic* sinking ever since. It has made its appearance dutifully

in every movie made about the disaster. In all likelihood, the band did play her hymn in addition to others.

A second historical connection to this hymn involves President William McKinley who was shot on September 6, 1901 and died eight days later. The attending physician reported that among McKinley's last words were "'Nearer, my God, to Thee, e'en though it be a cross,' has been my constant prayer." On the day of his funeral, after five minutes of silence across the nation, bands in Union and Madison Squares in New York City played the hymn in memory of the fallen president. It was also played at a memorial service for him in Westminster Abbey, London.



President McKinley and his wife

IN CONCLUSION

Sarah Flower Adams belonged to the Unitarian Church in England. The Unitarians do not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. You may have even noticed the absence of any reference to Jesus in her most famous hymn. We can only hope that the faith found in her heart when she died was different than what her church taught. How thankful we can be that we are indeed "Nearer to God" because of Christ's work.

Jane Eliza Leeson	(1807-1882)
Anna Hoppe	(1889-1941)
Anna Magdalena Meyer	(1867—?)

In our study of women in hymnody, we have been fortunate to have a lot of information at our disposal. For those who wrote much, it seems as though much was written about them. Frances Havergal, for example, even authored an autobiography. The situation is different, however, for the three women listed above. Information is sparse and pictures of them are difficult to find. They came and went, not leaving impressions with their lives, but with the poetry they have given the Christian world.

JANE ELIZA LEESON

We know where she lived (England) and the years of her life (1807-1882), but little else beyond that. Apparently she became a well known figure in the Catholic Apostolic Church, contributing nine hymns and translations to its hymn book. Later in her life she entered the Roman Catholic Church.

Apparently Miss Leeson was a bit Pentecostal in her theology as well. Some of her hymns were supposedly produced as "prophetic utterances," under the prompting of the Holy Spirit. A fellow member of her congregation recorded one such event at a service in Bishopsgate Church: "It was delivered slowly, with short pauses between the verses, a pause three times as long as anyone would ordinarily make in reading. I have not known anyone with similar gift; but I have heard of an improvisatore who far surpassed Miss Leeson. She only exercised her gift at long intervals and could choose her own time and her own subject. He improvised very freely, much more rapidly, and on any subject chosen for him by others."

“Take My Life and Let it Be”

The winter of 1877 and spring of 1878 were difficult times for Mrs. Havergal (Frances' stepmother) and she passed away on May 26, 1878. In 1879, the time came for Frances herself to be taken to the Lord Jesus. Having visited a sick sailor in a hospital, she contracted a fever. A week later on May 29th she was clearly dying as peritonitis set in. Her brother Frank came to be with her. She asked him to sing to her *Jerusalem, My Happy Home* and together they sang *How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds*. A rush of sickness then came upon her and she was gone. Her body is buried in Astley Churchyard in England. On her headstone, by her request, are the words of 1 John 1:7 **The Blood of Jesus Christ His Son Cleanseth Us From All Sin.**

Take my life and let it be Consecrated, Lord to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my love, my Lord I pour At Thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.



FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL (1836-1879)

Although her life was short, Frances Havergal represents a shining candle in the history of English hymn writing. Her deep love for the Lord Jesus is evident in her works which are known throughout the world.

The Early Years

Frances was born on December 14, 1836 at Astley Rectory in England, the youngest in a family of six children. Her father (a musician) gave her the nickname “little quicksilver” which described her childhood years quite accurately. She was gifted in intelligence and ability well beyond her years. Under the instruction of an older sister (Miriam), she was reading books by age three and the Bible at age four. In 1847, Frances lost her mother to illness. Before Mrs. Havergal died, however, she told her daughter: “You are my youngest little girl, and I feel more anxious about you than the rest. I do pray for the Holy Spirit to lead and guide you. And remember, nothing but the precious blood of Christ can make you clean and lovely in God’s sight.”

The years that followed were difficult. From that time on, Frances thought often about the Lord and about His Son Jesus. She knew herself a helpless sinner. She spent time reading her Bible, but just could not believe that Jesus had done such wonderful things *for her*.

In 1850 she went away to boarding school where the principal, Mrs. Teed, continued to bring her the word of God and the assurance that Jesus was her Savior. Through the witness of Mrs. Teed and several classmates at the school, the Holy Spirit worked firm conviction and trust in the heart of young Frances. The years of restlessness and dissatisfaction were over.

Growing in Grace

In 1851 her father remarried, an event which ended up being a joy to all. In 1852 the family moved to Germany for a year so that her father, who was losing his sight, could see an eye-specialist. While the family was there, Frances attended a German school under the supervision of Pastor Kraft. Much to her dismay, she found no one among the 110 other students who were interested in their Savior. It caused her to search the Scriptures even more diligently and she grew in her knowledge of Christ and her trust in Him.

Back in England, Frances and her lifelong friend Elizabeth Clay studied the Scriptures together. They would take walks in the country and repeat alternate verses with one another. Frances could recite all the Gospels, Epistles, Revelation, the Psalms, and Isaiah from memory. During this time she also began teaching Sunday School, to which her amazing memory was put to heavy use. Her chief objectives during this time were to teach these little ones about their eternal life in heaven with Jesus.

The Poetry

In 1865, at the age of 29, Miss Havergal returned to Germany to visit friends she had met during her previous visit. She had been composing hymn verses and music for several years and her German friends talked her into showing them to a man named Hiller—a well-known composer of the day. At first she would not, but finally she wrote to Hiller and he agreed to see her. After looking at the music she had written, he asked what regular music professor she had had. When she answered none, he could hardly believe it. Hiller himself began to popularize her music.

Through Many Trials

Miss Havergal was plagued with ill health much of her life. In 1866 her output of poetry had slowed considerably due to her condition. She once wrote in a letter that "God's crosses are often made of strange and unexpected material." She lived with her sister for a time, but began to feel that she was too much a burden. She did a bit of traveling during this time, visiting London and parts of Scotland.



On Easter Sunday, 1870, her beloved father suffered a stroke and passed away. Nevertheless, Frances and her stepmother did not sorrow as those who have no hope, but they knew he was at home with the Lord.

The Later Years

After the death of her father, she went to work collecting her hymns for publication in a volume titled *Havergal's Psalmody*. She also went on a hiking trip to Switzerland with her friend Elizabeth Clay. In Zermatt, Switzerland, she tells of bringing the Gospel of Jesus to a young waitress in a restaurant. In 1872, back again in England, she began to witness to laundry girls by going to the laundry itself. All the while, her publications of hymns and poetry continued. *Under the Surface* and *Ministry of Song* were made available.

A Great Cloud of Witnesses

The last years of her life were fully devoted to spreading the good news of Jesus' work. She wrote several devotional books which were published under her name (they are still available today). There have been many hymn writers, but there have been few who have so entirely devoted themselves to sharing their faith as did Frances Havergal. The Holy Spirit blessed her with a deep love for the Gospel and the courage to speak not only with her pen but with her mouth.