

## **Lecture #22 – Hymn Writers You Should Know – Part I**

### **I. Martin Luther**

1483-1546

German

Lutheran

One of the primary leaders of the Protestant Reformation

### **Misconceptions about Luther**

Misconception #1 – He used “bar” tunes or songs from the tavern.

He did use “bar form” – AAB

This has nothing to do with taverns, etc.

There is ONE documented case where he used a portion of a popular song.

“From Heaven Above To Earth I Come” – 1535

First verse was loosely based on a love song, “From Distant Land I Come to You”.

That love song’s tune was originally used at first but was replaced in the next printing.

Misconception #2 – He wrote “Away in a Manger”

Sadly, he did not.

It first appeared in 1882 and was claimed to be written by Luther and song to his children.

However, no evidence has been found to support this claim.

The song did not appear in German until it was translated into German from English in the 1930’s.

Luther did write a nativity song – “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come”.

### **Songs to Know**

“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”

## **II. Isaac Watts**

1674-1748

English

Congregationalist

Wrote over 700 hymns

### **Songs to Know**

“Alas, and did my Savior bleed?”

More familiarly known as the verses to “At the Cross”

“When I Survey The Wondrous Cross”

“Joy to the World”

Based on Psalm 98.

Generally used at Christmas, but is actually about the Second Coming.

“Am I A Soldier of the Cross”

“Jesus Shall Reign”

Based on Psalm 72

“Marching to Zion”

The verses are by Watts

## **III. Charles Wesley**

1707-1788

English

Methodist

Wrote over 6,500 hymns

Worked in conjunction with his brother John.

### Songs to Know

“And Can It Be?”

“Jesus, Lover of My Soul”

“Hark! the Herald Angels Sing”

Originally titled “Hark, how all the welkin [heaven/sky] rings”, but was changed by George Whitefield.

“Christ the Lord is Risen Today”

### **IV. Anne Steele**

1717-1778

English

Baptist

Wrote using pseudonym “Theodosia”

One of the most popular hymn writers of the 1700’s.

Had become largely forgotten but is making a comeback in popularity.

### Songs to Know

“Father, Whate’er of Earthly Bliss”

### **V. William Williams**

1717-1791

Welsh

Methodist

Sometimes called “Pantycelyn” (“Holly Hollow”) after the farm he lived on.

“The Watts of Wales”

### Songs to Know

“Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah”

## **VI. John Newton**

1725-1807

English

Anglican

Was heavily involved in the slave trade as a sailor, captain, and investor.

Converted in 1748.

Became a staunch abolitionist.

### Songs to Know

“Amazing Grace”

## **VII. William Cowper**

Pronounced “COOPER”

1731-1800

English

Anglican

One of the most respected poets of his day.

Worked with John Newton

### Songs to Know

“There is a Fountain”

When William Cowper, who had suffered from severe depression since the death of his mother when he was just six years old, was faced with the prospect of a final law examination before the House of Lords, he experienced a mental breakdown that he never fully recovered from. Having been sent to St. Alban’s asylum for eighteen months, he began to read the Bible, which brought some peace to his mind, and he was able to leave and live with his good family friend, famed author of “Amazing Grace,” John Newton. Newton helped Cowper recover, and together Cowper and Newton wrote poetry and religious verse, which they later published in their own hymnal. “There is a Fountain Filled With Blood” is one such hymn, and it is a dramatic illustration of Cowper’s faith. The last verse in particular speaks to Cowper’s hope of redemption; it reads, “When this poor lispng, stamm’ring tongue lies silent in the grave, then in a nobler, sweeter song I’ll sing thy pow’r to save.” The mental breakdown at his examination gave Cowper a lisp and stutter that he had the rest of his life, but he knew there was a greater song to be sung than any his earthly voice could raise, a song of praise to the dying Lamb.

“God Moves In A Mysterious Way”

Famous lyrics:

God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform.  
He plants his footsteps in the sea  
And rides upon the storm.

This hymn was written by William Cowper, a man who was afflicted with mental illness and depression for a large portion of his life. His illness got so severe that he tried to commit suicide three times. With treatment and the inspiration of his friend John Newton, he began to recover and write hymns. This hymn captures the mystery of God’s power, without questioning God’s goodness. The first line and title of the hymn, “God moves in a mysterious way,” has become a common saying to justify strange or tragic occurrences.

### **VIII. Robert Robinson**

1735-1790

English

Baptist

His church, St. Andrews's Street Baptist Church, grew from 34 members to filling a chapel built for 600.

### Songs to Know

“Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing”

In 1752, a young Robert Robinson attended an evangelical meeting to heckle the believers and make fun of the proceedings. Instead, he listened in awe to the words of the great preacher George Whitefield, and in 1755, at the age of twenty, Robinson responded to the call he felt three years earlier and became a Christian. Another three years later, when preparing a sermon for his church in Norfolk, England, he penned the words that have become one of the church's most-loved hymns: “Come, thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace.”

### **IX. John Fawcett**

1739-1817

English

Baptist

Pastor of Wainsgate Baptist Church in West Yorkshire, England.

### Songs to Know

“Blest Be The Tie That Binds”

There is a popular though somewhat unreliable story about the writing of this hymn. In 1772 Fawcett was completing his service to a small church in Wainsgate, England, having accepted a call to a larger congregation in London. However, after he had preached his farewell sermon

and loaded the carts for the move, the tearful entreaties of his congregation persuaded him to stay in Wainsgate, where he ministered for the rest of his life. This hymn is supposed to have been written in response to this experience.

## **X. Augustus Toplady**

1740-1778

English

Anglican

Was a major Calvinist opponent to John Wesley

### **Songs to Know**

“Rock of Ages”

There is a legend that Augustus Toplady was inspired to write this hymn after finding shelter from a thunderstorm in a cleft in a rock at Burrington Combe in Somerset, England in 1776. While evidence to support that story is lacking, it does provide a vivid image through which to understand the hymn.

## **XI. Charlotte Elliott**

1789-1871

English

Anglican

An invalid for most of her life.

Wrote numerous hymns and poems.

### **Songs to Know**

“Just as I Am”

At the age of 32, Charlotte Elliott suffered a serious illness that left her a semi-invalid for the rest of her life. Within a year she went through a spiritual crisis and confessed to the Swiss evangelist Henri A. Cesar Malan that she did not know how to come to Christ. He answered, "Come to him just as you are." Thinking back on that experience twelve years later, in 1834, she wrote “Just as I Am” as a statement of her faith.

## **XII. Lowell Mason**

1792-1872

American

Presbyterian

“The father of American church music”

Worked to elevate the quality of American church music.

Led in improving music education.

Wrote the music for “Mary had a Little Lamb”.

### **Songs to Know**

Tunes composed:

OLIVET – “My Faith Looks Up To Thee”

BETHANY – “Nearer, My God, To Thee”

HAMBURG – “When I Survey The Wondrous Cross”

WORK SONG – “Work, for the Night is Coming”

ANTIOCH – “Joy to the World”

## **XIII. Edward Mote**



1797-1874

English

Baptist

He was trained as a cabinet maker and worked in London for 37 years. Only in his 50s did he enter the ministry and was pastor at Rehoboth Baptist Church in Horsham, West Sussex for 26 years. He was well liked by the congregation in Horsham and they offered him the church building as a gift. Mote replied "I do not want the chapel, I only want the pulpit; and when I cease to preach Christ, then turn me out of that."

### Songs to Know

“The Solid Rock”

As Edward Mote was walking to work one day in 1834, the thought popped into his head to write a hymn on the “Gracious Experience of a Christian.” As he walked up the road, he had the chorus, “On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.” By the end of the day, he had the first four verses written out and safely tucked away in his pocket. Later that week, he visited his friend whose wife was very ill, and as they couldn’t find a hymnal to sing from, he dug up his newly written verses and sang those with the couple. The wife enjoyed them so much she asked for a copy, and Mote went home to finish the last two verses and sent it off to a publisher, saying, “As these verses so met the dying woman’s case, my attention to them was the more arrested, and I had a thousand printed for distribution”

## **XIV. William Bradbury**

1816-1868

American

Presbyterian

Student of Lowell Mason

### Songs to Know

Wrote the tunes:

WOODWORTH – “Just as I am”

HE LEADETH ME

SWEET HOUR OF PRAYER

SOLID ROCK

BRADBURY – “Savior, Like A Shepherd Lead Us”

JESUS LOVES ME

## **XV. Joseph Scriven**

1819-1886

Irish-Canadian

Plymouth Brethren

Educated at Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland, he enrolled in a military college to prepare for an army career. However, poor health forced him to give up that ambition. Soon after came a second blow—his fiancée died in a drowning accident on the eve of their wedding in 1844. Later that year he moved to Ontario, where he taught school in Woodstock and Brantford. His plans for marriage were dashed again when his new bride-to-be died after a short illness in 1855. Following this calamity Scriven seldom had a regular income, and he was forced to live in the homes of others. He also experienced mistrust from neighbors who did not appreciate his eccentricities or his work with the underprivileged. A member of the Plymouth Brethren, he tried to live according to the Sermon on the Mount as literally as possible, giving and sharing all he had and often doing menial tasks for the poor and physically disabled. Because Scriven suffered from depression, no one knew if his death by drowning in Rice Lake was suicide or an accident.

### **Songs to Know**

“What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

It’s a tragic story and, like all tragedies, hard to make sense of. And yet, God still works in and through our stories and losses to fulfill His purposes. Shortly after Scriven moved to Ontario, it’s said he wrote the text “What a Friend” to send back to his mother in Ireland to comfort her in a time of sorrow. After its publication, a neighbor asked if Scriven really did write it, and he replied, “The Lord and I did it between us”

## **XVI. Fanny Crosby**

Born Frances Jane Crosby on March 24, 1820, in Brewster, New York.

Died February 12, 1915, in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Blinded at six weeks old.

Began writing poems by age 8.

By age 15 had memorized multiple books of the Bible.

Enrolled in the New York Institute for the Blind, where she would stay as student and then teacher for many years.

The first song lyrics she wrote were for secular songs, many with music by George F. Root.

Wrote words for cantatas, political, and patriotic songs.

Converted at age 31

The congregation was singing “Alas and Did My Savior Bleed?”

She heard the line: “Here, Lord, I give myself away, ‘Tis all that I can do.”

“My very soul was flooded with celestial light. For the first time I realized that I had been trying to hold the world in one hand, and the Lord in the other.”

Married Alexander van Alstyne, Jr. in 1843.

He was also blind and a student and teacher at NYIB.

In 1859 their infant daughter Frances died in her sleep shortly after birth.

The two grew apart and were separate by 1880.

Alexander died in 1902

Wrote over 8,000 hymn texts and 1,000 secular poems

Was generally paid \$1 or \$2 per hymn.

Used over 200 different pen names

Her songs were popularized by D.L. Moody and Ira Sankey

## **Songs to Know**

“My Savior First of All”

“Saved by Grace”

“Close to Thee”

“All the Way my Savior leads Me”

“Safe in the Arms of Jesus”

“He Hideth My Soul”

“To God Be The Glory”

“Redeemed”

Alternate Tune – ADA

“Blessed Assurance”

## **XVII. Robert Lowry**

1826-1899

American

Baptist

"I have no method. Sometimes the music comes and the words follow, fitted insensibly to the melody. I watch my moods, and when anything good strikes me, whether words or music, and no matter where I am, at home or on the street, I jot it down. Often the margin of a newspaper or the back of an envelope serves as a notebook. My brain is a sort of spinning machine, I think, for there is music running through it all the time. I do not pick out my music on the keys of an instrument. The tunes of nearly all the hymns I have written have been completed on paper before I tried them on the organ. Frequently the words of the hymn and the music have been written at the same time."

### **Songs to Know**

“Shall We Gather at the River?”

Wrote lyrics and music

This hymn was written by Robert Lowry in the summer of 1864 in Brooklyn, New York. The text came out of Lowry's thoughts on the metaphor of the river in Christian thoughts about death. He wrote, "I began to wonder why the hymn-writers has said so much about the 'river of death' and so little about 'the pure water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb'"

"Nothing But the Blood of Jesus"

"Christ Arose"

"I Need Thee Every Hour"

"All The Way My Saviour Leads Me"

### **XVIII. Horatio Spafford**

1828-1888

American

Presbyterian

Sort of went a little crazy later in life.

Moved to Jerusalem in 1881 and started an "utopian society" that became known as the American Colony.

### **Songs to Know**

"It Is Well"

In November, 1873, Horatio Spafford sent his wife and four daughters on the French ship Ville du Havre from their home in Chicago to a vacation in France, planning to set out a few days later himself. Somewhere in the Atlantic, the Ville du Havre collided with a British ship coming the other way, and sank in just 12 minutes. Of his family, only Spafford's wife survived. Spafford took the next boat over, and as he passed the spot where the ship went down, began to write, "When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll," and continued until he had the text, "It is well with my soul." His good friend, Philip Bliss, composed the tune for his words, naming it after the ship, VILLE DU HAVRE.

## **XIX. William Doane**

1832-1915

American

Baptist

Was also a staunch supporter of evangelistic campaigns and a prolific writer of hymn tunes. He was head of a large woodworking machinery plant in Cincinnati and a civic leader in that city. He showed his devotion to the church by supporting the work of the evangelistic team of Dwight L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey and by endowing Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and Denison University in Granville, Ohio. An amateur composer, Doane wrote over twenty-two hundred hymn and gospel song tunes, and he edited over forty songbooks.

### **Songs to Know**

Tunes written by Doane

PASS ME NOT

RESCUE THE PERISHING

NEAR THE CROSS

DRAW ME NEARER

TAKE THE NAME OF JESUS WITH YOU

TO GOD BE THE GLORY