

Moravian Women's Association

Devotional Paper

November 2019

Wonder Women! Then and Now

Music is an integral part of worship and I'm sure we all agree that it can be very emotive. The tempo and style of any music can make us feel quiet and pensive or happy, lively and jubilant within seconds of hearing it. Hymns sensitively placed in a service can do just that, thus re-enforcing the message of the moment. It is not just the melody that evokes a feeling inside us but twinned with the words, whether sung lustily or almost whispered, they make our worship so much more meaningful.

Over the decades our hymns have changed – or have they? Some may say they needed to change, others may say that 21st century hymns are trite, repetitive and less meaningful. Whatever your views, hymns have the power to change us and those around us. The great children's favourite 'All Things Bright and Beautiful' was written by Cecil Frances Alexander way back in the eighteen hundreds as were 'There is a Green Hill' and 'Once in Royal David's City'. Many of us during communion sing 'Break thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me' – words that were written by Mary Lathbury who was born in 1841. I hope you would agree that our services are richer when we sing these hymns written so long ago.

One of my favourite hymns is 'All the way my Saviour leads me' words written by Fanny Crosby who, again lived in the 19th century. It never fails to leave me with a feeling of satisfaction, peace and wellbeing in the knowledge that Jesus is always there. Fanny also wrote another two of my favourites 'To God be the Glory' and 'Blessed Assurance'. She was so prolific in her song writing that she sometimes wrote under a pseudonym. Despite being blinded almost at birth she wrote over 8,000 hymns. During 2010 the American Moravian singer George Hamilton IV toured many Methodist Chapels celebrating Fanny's outstanding contribution to hymn writing.

Frances Havergal didn't enjoy good health throughout her short life. She died at the age of 42 but left a wonderful legacy of hymns that are still enjoyed today. She was born in 1836 in the village of Astley in Worcestershire, an intelligent yet sensitive child who, by the age of four, could read the Bible and any ordinary book correctly. She soon picked up French and music and in later life she dedicated all her musical talent to her father, with whom she was very much 'one in spirit and in gifts'. Although Frances was joyous and excitable, her highly strung nature often gave way to depression and gloom but, being fully focused on serving her Lord, she used what she had learned from these dark, difficult times to help others who were experiencing similar trials. 'Lord, speak to me', 'Who is on the Lord's side', 'I am trusting thee Lord Jesus', and 'Standing at the Portal' feature amongst her most popular hymns sung today but my favourite would be 'Take my Life and let it be'. Teamed with the beautiful music of Mozart, who could not lose themselves in the wonderful words of this hymn? Frances used her hands as a great pianist, her voice as an inspirational singer, her time and her whole life to work for, and to praise God. Four years after writing this hymn she had all her ornaments (gold and silver) shipped off to a mission house (more than 50 articles)!

This whole paper is about 'Wonder Women' through the ages who recorded their relationship with God and Jesus through words and song. I'm sure they changed

people's lives and can still change our lives today as we sing hymns – new and old – to the glory of God.

For Discussion

1. What is your favourite hymn and why?
2. Read through the words of 'Take my Life' and discuss how we can bring them to life today.

Take My Life

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 hands, and let them move
at the impulse of Thy love;
take my feet, and let them be
swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing
always, only, for my King;
take my lips, and let them be
filled with messages from Thee.

Take my silver and my gold,
not a mite would I withhold;
take my intellect, and use
every power as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine:
take my heart, it is Thine own;
it shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour
at Thy feet its treasured store;
take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for Thee.

Words by Frances Havergal
Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart