



# Satisfied

Women Hymn Writers of the 19<sup>th</sup>-  
Century Wesleyan/Holiness Movement

Keith Schwanz

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## Foreword

**K**eith Schwanz's *Satisfied: Women Hymn Writers of the 19th-century Wesleyan/Holiness Movement* is published in conjunction with the third international Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy Conference (San Antonio, April 23–26, 1998). These brief stories illustrate one of the ministries of Wesleyan/Holiness women.

The distinctive doctrine of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition is sanctification or holiness. Sanctification cleanses the heart and empowers believers for service and ministry. These women used synonyms such as “cleansing power,” “total consecration,” and “full salvation” to describe the purity of heart and power for service they experienced in the Holy Spirit. While Fanny Crosby left no record of an experience of sanctification, her circle of friends included Wesleyan/Holiness individuals and she attended Wesleyan/Holiness camp meetings.

Rev. Dr. Susie C. Stanley, Series Editor  
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## Prelude

The children of Israel set out on the journey, aware that God gave them a new beginning. Finally they were free. Plague by plague, God had loosened Egypt's grip on Israel's neck. They caught their breath in a solemn meal which celebrated God's action on their behalf, then hit the road for the promised land.

At first the novelty of the journey exhilarated the travelers. Then fear raised its head as they marched into the unknown. But whenever fear would take a peek, the Israelites would just look ahead to see the cloud which led them by day and the fire which led them by night. These visible signs of God's leadership calmed their concerns.

That is, until their journey abruptly stopped at a dead end. When they bumped into the Red Sea they instinctively looked over their shoulder to see if the Egyptians were coming. Sure enough, they could see the dust clouds telegraphing the pursuit. The Israelites did an about face, cursing Moses for leading them into a trap. There they stood—their back against the wall, their face flushed and veins standing out on their recently liberated neck.

Then God performed a miracle. Not an illusion. Not a coincidence. A miracle.

Moses got the people facing forward again as the cloud moved behind them. With the vapor shield in place, the Egyptians spent the night in darkness while the Israelites operated in the light. In obedience to God, Moses stretched out his hands and the Red Sea parted until a trail appeared. All night long, wave after wave of Israelites hurried across the Sea. At daybreak they counted noses. Everyone was present.

About this time the Egyptians discovered the miracle trail. (It seems like God's enemies are always the last to recognize a miracle.) As they hurried onto the sea floor to close in on their prey, God brought confusion on the army. Wheels came flying off of the chariots. Horses reared, throwing riders to the ground. Then, to cover up the mess they had created, God caused the water to flow back to its usual position.

Israel watched these events with awe-opened eyes. A bit stunned, they knew they had witnessed the great power of God. At first a quiet reverence settled over the camp—a collective “wow” in hushed tones. Then, as they began to recognize that God had secured their deliverance, a song started. At first it was soft. Only a few voices were heard. Then, one by one, people joined the celebration until everyone united for a collective “hip hip hooray” in full voice. Exodus 15 records the words of this song, a hymn of praise to their highly exalted, all-powerful God. Exodus 15:20 tells us that Miriam and “all the women” led this procession of praise, the first congregational song recorded in the Bible.

The best songs are written like that. God does something which only God can do, and God's people

respond with a song of praise and thanksgiving. That is true worship: people giving God credit for the blessings they enjoy.

Many of the songs we love to sing grew out of the experiences of their writers. The following stories are about women hymn writers of the 19th-century Wesleyan/Holiness Movement. In each case, the author had a spiritual experience, the significance and meaning of which she expressed in a song. All the women featured here were involved in ministry, although most of them were not ordained. Hymn writing was only one facet of their service to God. In each section that follows, we will consider the woman's spiritual pilgrimage, her ministry involvement, and a description of at least one hymn that she wrote.

# Singing in the Face of Death

**Phoebe Palmer (1807–1874)**

**P**hoebe Palmer, with her husband, Walter, and her sister, Sarah Lankford, was returning to New York from a Methodist camp meeting in the Boston area. A little after ten o'clock in the evening, an explosion rocked the ship on which they were traveling. The passengers panicked. Most thought the ship was going down. Instinctively, Phoebe started singing in the face of death.

*While Thou art intimately nigh,  
Who! Who shall violate my rest?*

Sarah joined the song.

*I rest beneath the Almighty's shade,  
My griefs expire, my troubles cease.  
Thou, Lord, on whom my soul is stayed  
Wilt keep Thine own in perfect peace.*

When Phoebe and Sarah finished the hymn, the passengers asked them to sing some more. About this time Walter came into the room and joined the song. The trio of voices sang “How do Thy mercies close me round.” When one man heard the singing, he shouted, “There are some Methodists here!” and the clamor subsided as the song intensified. The passengers, now calm, patiently waited as the ship with a damaged boiler crept into New York Harbor several hours late (Wheatley, 305–307).

Phoebe had faced death before, but not with a song. She gave birth to two sons who died in infancy. A daughter, Sarah, was healthy, but another daughter, Eliza, born two years later, was not. Both Phoebe and Eliza almost died. Slowly they gained strength until it seemed like the danger had passed.

After putting the 11-month-old Eliza to bed one summer evening, Phoebe left her daughter in the care of a nursemaid while she talked with a friend who had stopped by to visit. While trying to fill an alcohol lamp without extinguishing the flame, the nursemaid was burned and dropped the lamp in the crib. Phoebe lost her third child to a fiery death that night.

In her diary, Phoebe wrote, “After the angel spirit winged its way to Paradise, I retired alone, not willing that any one should behold my sorrow. . . . In the agony of my soul I had exclaimed, ‘O, what shall I do!’ And the answer now came,—‘Be still, and know that I am God’” (Wheatley, 31). As God began to conquer Phoebe’s grief, the pace of her spiritual journey quickened. And a song was beginning to form in her heart.

About two years after Eliza’s death, Phoebe experienced

what she called “the day of days,” July 26, 1837. Three days before, Phoebe’s pastor had asked her to visit a woman who had prayed at the altar of their church. She was new to the congregation and Phoebe was asked to follow up on her. While visiting with the recently converted woman, Phoebe met the woman’s sister. Phoebe asked her if she felt the same need in her spirit that Jesus had satisfied in her sister’s. “In a manner exceedingly repulsive, she answered, No!” (Wheatley, 37).

On the evening of the third day after this conversation with the young lady, she was powerfully converted, the Spirit having used my lips in convincing her of sin. Between the hours of eight and nine o’clock the same evening, I was led by the Spirit to the determination that I would never rest, day or night, until I knew that the spring of every motive was pure, and that the consecration I made of myself was wholly accepted (Wheatley, 38).

Phoebe continued her prayer, until petition turned into praise. “O! into what a region of light, glory and purity, was my soul at this moment ushered! I felt that I was but as a drop in the ocean of infinite LOVE, and Christ was All in All” (Wheatley, 43–44).

Phoebe had been active in the ministry of her church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, but with her total consecration a new power for ministry began to emerge. Phoebe’s older sister, Sarah, had suggested that they conduct a Bible study for women in the house their two families shared. At first Sarah was the recognized leader. As time went on, however, Phoebe played an increasing role. At the request of one woman who wanted to bring her husband, men started attending the Bible study, now

called the “Tuesday Meeting” since they were held on Tuesday afternoons. As many as 300 people attended some of these sessions. Under the influence of Phoebe Palmer, the objective of the meetings was clear: “These meetings are not for debate, controversy, or speechifying, but for holiness” (Wheatley, 251–252).

As the word about Tuesday Meetings spread, Phoebe’s role in the emerging 19th-century holiness revival expanded. In addition to her leadership at the Tuesday Meetings, her published poems and articles increased her influence (Raser, 104).

Phoebe exhibited literary ability early in her life. When she was just 11 years old, she wrote a poem on the flyleaf of a New Testament she had been given. The final stanza of the poem read,

*Henceforth, I take thee as my future guide,  
Let naught from thee my youthful heart divide  
And then, if late or early death be mine,  
All will be well, since I, O Lord, am thine!*  
(Wheatley, 18).

In the same month that Eliza was born, Phoebe wrote in her diary, “I have, since my childhood[,] been in the habit of composing verses, occasionally. I have never dared to give anything to the public, other than I had cause to believe would be for the glory of God. My views of responsibility led me to reason thus. If I have a talent for writing, God has given it. To use that talent in any other way than to promote his glory, would be sacrilegious” (Wheatley, 28).

Phoebe’s popularity increased dramatically after

the publication of *The Way of Holiness* in 1842. This book eventually sold 100,000 copies around the world. In 1863 Phoebe's husband, Walter, purchased the periodical *Guide to Holiness*, and Phoebe served as its editor until her death.

At the same time her publishing efforts expanded, opportunities for her to preach at revival campaigns and camp meetings increased.

As historians look back on the life of Phoebe Palmer, it is easy for her contributions as an evangelist—25,000 people were converted under her ministry—and theologian to eclipse her work as a hymn writer.

For the children's Christmas program in 1837, Phoebe wrote "dialogues, pieces and hymns." In her diary she said, "We had on Christmas day, a most interesting and delightful Sunday-school celebration" (Wheatley, 175).

Late in 1838, in a letter to a friend, Phoebe wrote that during the summer she "attended two camp-meetings, spent nearly a month on a visit to Baltimore, have written hymns, dialogues, and pieces for Sabbath-school celebrations,—I don't know how many" (Wheatley, 132–133).

In a letter to Mary James in 1841, Phoebe again mentioned writing "Sabbath-school hymns . . . for the Christmas and New Year's anniversaries" (Wheatley, 175). By 1844, however, other activities had taken all of her time and she was unable to fulfill a publisher's request for a book of Christmas program material.

Phoebe's work as a hymn writer seems to have become less regular as her speaking opportunities increased. She would still write, however, for specific events. In 1869 Phoebe and Walter attended the dedication of the Court

Street Methodist Episcopal Church in Utica, New York, for which Phoebe wrote the dedication hymn (Wheatley, 449). The Palmers held revival services at the church in the days following the dedication.

The Palmers moved into a new house in 1870, just four years before Phoebe's death. Phoebe wrote a hymn for the dedication service they conducted on Tuesday afternoon, November 29th. The people sang, in part,

*And now, O Lord, behold and see!  
Thy people in thy name have met,  
To dedicate this house to Thee;  
Here let Thy holy seal be set.  
And in this house wilt thou abide:  
We consecrate it to Thy name;  
In every room and heart reside,  
And here Thy hallowing grace proclaim.*  
(Wheatley, 151)

During June 1871 Phoebe wrote a letter to Mrs. Hamline, wife of a Methodist Bishop, with which she enclosed a copy of a hymn she wrote at the request of her daughter, Phoebe Palmer Knapp, a musician and composer. (Knapp is best known for her tune to Fanny Crosby's "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine.") Phoebe wrote that her standard practice was to kneel before a blank sheet of paper as she "asked that the Lord would give matter and manner" (Wheatley, 621).

We do not know for sure, but the hymn written by Phoebe and her daughter may have been "The Cleansing Wave." We do know that it was written sometime before

1873. George Hughes published a book of reports about 14 holiness camp meetings of the 1867–1872 period, stating that “The Cleansing Wave” was “sung with good effect in the forest temple, while precious souls plunge into the cleansing stream, rising renewed in all the life of God” (Hughes, 253).

A member of her family described the last days of Phoebe’s life. As she lay dying, friends and family would read Scripture to her. “Put my name in it” she would often say when a favorite promise was read (Wheatley, 624). Words of praise to God were often on her lips. Then she would ask the gathered group to sing a hymn, sometimes one she had written. Phoebe lay in bed, singing in the face of death.

# All for Jesus

**Mary D. James (1810–1883)**

If Phoebe Palmer was the Moses of the 19th-century Wesleyan/Holiness Movement, leading Israel to Canaan, then Mary James was the Aaron. Just as Aaron held Moses' arms during the battle with the Amalekites (Exodus 17:12), so Mary assisted Phoebe in the campaign to conquer darkness with the light of full salvation. If the Palmers were not at Ocean Grove, for example, Mary would lead the holiness meetings. Much correspondence traveled between Mary and Phoebe, and Mary was often a guest in the Palmer home.

In December 1841, just when Phoebe's speaking ministry was picking up steam, Phoebe wrote Mary to ask her to be a prayer partner. Phoebe wrote, "I am at present placed in very responsible circumstances. Can you not meet me daily at the throne of grace, at two P.M.?" (Wheatley, 265).

About the same time, Phoebe was helping in a church in Burlington, New Jersey. Mary had traveled about ten

miles from her home in Mount Holly to be with Phoebe and asked her to speak at a "female prayer-meeting" in Mount Holly. The pastors in Burlington resisted the idea that Phoebe leave town since her "visit was designed for them," but they finally agreed that if Phoebe would be back in Burlington for an evening meeting, she could go to Mount Holly. "Some of the brethren attended" the meeting in Mount Holly. "It was a glorious meeting. I think I never was where there was a more general descent of the Holy Ghost." Phoebe concluded her report on the meeting by saying, "O, how Sister James and myself rejoiced at the work of the Lord" (Wheatley, 263).

The two women worked together in camp meetings also. In August 1848 they were at a camp meeting near Philadelphia. In a letter to Methodist Bishop and Mrs. Hamline, Phoebe wrote that "Sister James was present. How sweetly does her life exhibit the beauty of holiness. I think I never saw an individual more fully possessed of that love that thinketh no evil, than our beloved Sister James, yet as she professes the enjoyment of a state of holiness, she has her trials" (Wheatley, 79).

Phoebe was quite particular concerning who would lead the Tuesday Meeting in her absence. In April of 1845, Phoebe was confined to bed, and in a letter to Mary she explained her concern for the meeting and her contentment with the ability of her sister, Sarah, to lead the meeting. "You may wonder why I should regard it so needful, that a special person should be present to take charge of the meeting, when there are generally three or four ministers, and several leaders, etc., present. The reason is, as before stated, that it is a peculiar meeting, and needs that peculiar

management, which very childlike—simple piety exhibits, and it is not every day that you can meet with those who know just how to come down to the simplicity of the gospel—but I think Sister Sarah does” (Wheatley, 246). Mary had the same skills, and Phoebe never hesitated to entrust the care of souls to her.

Mary’s personal ministry was varied. She started teaching Sunday school in the Methodist Episcopal Church when she was just 13 years of age. Her first class of young girls soon grew to include 12 “lambs.” Not content to see her girls just on Sundays, she would visit them in their homes, often taking gifts her mother had made. Mary continued her involvement in Sunday schools throughout her life, for she had a great love for children. She would lead children’s meetings at the Ocean Grove, New Jersey, camp meeting, and wrote a column for children in the *Guide to Holiness*.

Mary was one who made good use of music for spiritual goals. One evening, during a Methodist class meeting, a woman not known to the group sobbed through a confession that she had once been a child of God, but now lived with no hope. Mary felt the weight of the woman’s despair. As the woman finished speaking, Mary began to sing.

*The feeble, the faithless, the weak are His care:  
The helpless, the hopeless; He hears their sad prayer.  
Through great tribulations His people He’ll bring,  
And when they reach heaven the louder they’ll sing.*  
(James, 137)

Mary's great love, however, was the camp meeting. She attended her first camp meeting as a child, and was an advocate of meeting in the "forest temple" her whole life. A description of the "after meeting" at Penn's Grove, New Jersey, in 1856 reveals her extensive involvement in evangelistic efforts.

The camp meeting had officially concluded on Saturday, but Mary and several others were staying on the campgrounds until Monday. During a prayer meeting on Saturday evening, the group realized that people from the surrounding area would probably come for services on Sunday. A few workers might be present with a "multitude of unconverted persons" gathering. Their prayer that evening was that God would multiply their "two loaves and a few small fishes."

Mary was awake early Sunday morning and walked some distance from the camp to commune with God. "O there was a sanctity, a hollowed sweetness, in that blessed Sabbath day. As I lifted my heart to the Most High and asked Him to fill me with the Spirit, that I might be empowered to work for Him, I felt it descend upon me, and I was so strengthened with might in the inner man that I could not have hesitated to do any duty" (James, 286).

As she returned to the camp, she went to the cooking area where she talked with the cooks about Jesus. Only one out of six was a Christian. One promised to seek the Savior.

Mary asked God to guide her, and she found a woman who had been "blessed the night before" who needed some instruction in the life of faith.

At nine o'clock they started a testimony meeting.

When Mary spoke, she spoke of her own experience, then preached an evangelistic message. Of the episode Mary wrote, "I was only the organ of clay through which God chose to speak to the people, but the power of the Spirit rested upon me. I felt it like fire in my bones" (James, 287).

A Universalist came to the campground that day in an argumentative spirit. After lunch a group formed around him. As Mary approached the group and listened for a bit, she told the man she wanted to ask him one question. He turned and left the camp grounds without hearing her question. Mary admonished the group on the truth of Christian doctrine, and led them in the song "We're bound for the land of the pure and the holy, Will you go?" Several were converted in that impromptu meeting.

As Mary turned from this group, she saw several men sitting together, each looking quite somber. She was drawn to two brothers who, while presently sober, bore all of the signs of intemperance. Mary talked with them at great length, but both left the camp grounds without a spiritual breakthrough. One man returned that evening and was converted along with several others.

About midnight, just as someone suggested that it was time to close the meeting, a woman brought in a man who wanted to pray. The woman left and found another seeker, and the prayer meeting continued until about three o'clock Monday morning. The official camp meeting had ended on Saturday, but God was not finished, and Mary James and a few other workers were instruments of grace.

Mary not only served the Lord through personal encounters, but also through her writings. She was an avid letter writer. Recipients of her letters included many

young pastors. She believed that God had given her the responsibility to encourage and nurture those just beginning their ministries.

Her articles were published in many periodicals, including the *Guide to Holiness*, the *New York Christian Advocate*, *The Contributor*, *The Christian Witness*, *The Christian Woman*, *The Christian Standard*, and the *Ocean Grove Record*. Inspiration might come from a sermon, a snippet of a conversation, or something she read. Often she would wake in the night and ponder a newly discovered thought.

When she rose in the morning she would “scribble” the essence of her thoughts, then put them in final form at a later time (James, 240).

Sometimes her cogitations would result in a hymn. In her lifetime Mary had more than 50 hymns published. The tunes for Mary’s songs were written by several leading composers of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement, including Phoebe Palmer Knapp, William Kirkpatrick, and John Sweney.

Mary’s most durable hymn was written as a New Year’s resolution. In her New Year’s letter for 1871, Mary reviewed the previous year. She rejoiced in her effectiveness for the cause of Christ. She wrote, “I have written more, talked more, prayed more, and thought more for Jesus than in any previous year, and had more peace of mind, resulting from a stronger and more simple faith in Him.” She recognized that her heightened ministry was a direct result of the depth of her commitment to God. She wrote “All for Jesus” as a commitment that in the coming year every action would reveal the glory and grace of God (James, 199).

Her prayer of commitment was answered. A dozen

years later, as her body was laid to rest in the Mercer Cemetery at Trenton, New Jersey, inscribed on a granite monument was the simple statement: "Her life was ALL FOR JESUS" (James, 360).

## Circuit Riding Preacher

**Clara Tear Williams (1858–1937)**

Leaving her husband and two young daughters at home, Clara Tear Williams attended the annual conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. At that time, 1901, Clara served as the pastor of a small congregation at Indiana, Pennsylvania, while it was still in its infancy. The conference called Brother Campbell to the work of traveling president. He was reluctant to accept the assignment unless a capable pastor would assume the responsibilities of his current appointment, the Sandy Lake circuit. Only one person was deemed acceptable, Brother A. D. Fero. That left the Pine Grove circuit without a pastor. As all eyes surveyed members of the conference, attention focused on Clara and she was “earnestly requested” to become a circuit riding preacher. In her unpublished autobiography Clara wrote, “There was no time to consult my husband and the responsibility was very heavy. I was compelled to decide. I knew that Mr. W. [Williams] was God’s man and would accept His will, so after some strong

crying to God I felt clear to accept the charge. It was a startling surprise to my dear husband."

There were four churches that made up the Pine Grove circuit: Dixonville and Hillsdale at one end, and Rich Hill and Spruce at the other. Clara would preach at Dixonville and Hillsdale one Sunday, then drive her horse and buggy to Rich Hill and Spruce for services the next Sunday. She served this circuit for five years (Williams, 14).

The Tear family had deep roots in Methodism. Clara's grandfather, John Tear, heard John Wesley speak during at least one of Wesley's two visits to the Isle of Man, a small island off the coast of England. When the Tear family moved to Lake County, Ohio, in 1826, they immediately associated with the Methodist Episcopal Church. Clara remembered having writings of the early Methodists in her childhood home, including works by Mrs. Fletcher, Hester Ann Rogers, and the Wesleys. They also subscribed to periodicals like the *Christian Advocate* and the *Guide to Holiness* which was edited by Phoebe Palmer.

The strong spiritual dimension of her home environment prepared Clara's heart for the work of God. One night, while just a 13-year-old girl sitting toward the back of the sanctuary in her home church, she became aware of God's gracious invitation to be forgiven of her sins. She wrote, "As I started up the aisle toward the altar, the love of God came into my heart. It was not strong, but real. . . [I] fixed that as the turning point in my life" (Williams, 2).

During the fall of 1875, when Clara was 17, some "Holiness people" from Cleveland were holding meetings in Montville, a few miles from where the Tear family lived.

Clara attended one service with her parents. She recalled that during the service, "My heart was touched. I knew my need and accepted an invitation to the altar, with no apparent result. As we drove from the church . . . the question came forcibly, would I be willing to give up the world . . . and fully follow the Lord? My heart responded 'Yes' and there flowed through my being a flood of glory that was inexpressible" (Williams, 2).

Spiritual battles continued, much to Clara's dismay. Even though she had made Jesus first in her life, she loathed her reluctance to testify publicly to God's work in her heart. When schoolmates teased her because of her religious involvement, she succumbed to their pressure and remained silent.

Then God came with sanctifying power.

"On a Sunday the following spring, I went to what was called a holiness meeting in Hampden, the town south of us. I had felt unusually irritable that morning because my parents refused to allow me to invite a neighbor girl to accompany us. I was tempted to stay at home. The ride was far from enjoyable.

"As we entered the church the congregation was singing that familiar hymn, "I need Thee every hour." Through the song the Holy Spirit burnt into my soul my awful need of His abiding presence.

"I remember little else about the service, but from that time I knew what it was to 'hunger and thirst after righteousness' and could think of little else.

"While I had given myself to the Lord, it now seemed infinitely more to consent to His taking possession, and control of my entire being. . . .

“On the following Tuesday I returned to the meetings. As I sat in the evening service I came to a point where . . . I died to the world and self. Faith was spontaneous. When there was a request for those to stand who had received the cleansing, I rose to my feet and as I did so, the glory came. I have never attempted to describe it.

“I had been very timid, never could pray in public and could give only a few words of testimony. Now my tongue was loosed. The fear of man was gone. I felt like a bird in the air. Oh, it was wonderful.

“Very soon after this I was definitely called to public service. It came on three successive days. The Lord talked to my heart. The scripture used was John 15:16, ‘Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain’” (Williams, 3–4).

A short time later, Clara was helping with evangelistic services in Troy, Ohio. Ralph E. Hudson, frequently referred to as “Professor,” was the song evangelist. Following an evening service, Hudson asked the young Clara to write something for a gospel songbook he was publishing. Before going to bed that evening, Clara wrote “Satisfied.” Ralph created the tune the next morning. Clara wrote a few other songs, but none had the popularity or longevity of “Satisfied.”

Following her call to ministry, Clara had an opportunity to accompany Sister Mary DePew, an evangelist in the Wesleyan Methodist church, for a series of revival meetings in Indiana during the fall and winter of 1882–1883. Clara consented to go, but backed out at the last minute. Clara immediately began to suffer with remorse.

“Oh, the agony I suffered! I felt God had forsaken me. It was the first time I had failed to walk in the will of God and the light of Heaven in my soul was changed to the blackness of night.

“After groaning and tossing for a time it was plain to me that my only hope was to confess what I had done. To confess to my parents cost a struggle, but when I did it my dry burning eyes were flooded with tears, and there came the sweet assurance that the Lord had forgiven me.

“I believe this is the only time in these nearly sixty years that I have failed to walk in the will of God as best I have known it” (Williams, 6).

The next winter (1883–1884) Clara assisted Sister DePew in evangelistic meetings in Indiana and Michigan. Again the following winter (1884–1885) Clara worked with Sister DePew in Ohio. During the winter of 1885–1886, Clara traveled alone, preaching in the state of Indiana. For the next several years Clara traveled back and forth from Indiana to New York, preaching in churches and at camp meetings. Occasionally she would serve a congregation as a supply pastor for a few weeks or months.

In 1894 Clara spent most of her time caring for her father who was in poor health. On Saturday mornings, however, after seeing that her father had provisions and was comfortable, she hitched up her horse to the buggy and drove 20 miles to Middlefield, Ohio. The Middlefield congregation had a partially furnished parsonage where Clara spent the night. A barn was on the property with enough hay for her horse. Clara preached in Middlefield on Sunday morning, then drove 10 miles to Windsor Mills for an evening service. On Monday morning she would

drive the 15 miles to the home she shared with her father. Clara repeated the circuit the next weekend. Her father died on December 10, 1894 (Williams, 10–11).

While preaching at a revival at the Methodist Protestant church in Youngstown, Ohio, in early 1895, Clara became “acquainted with W. H. Williams. He was a lay preacher and Sunday school worker . . . It was simply a friendly Christian acquaintance” (Williams, 11). Clara was surprised when one night “there came to me the revelation that that man was to be my husband.” By now Clara was in her mid-30s. With both of her parents in heaven she no longer had to care for them. She “loved the work of an evangelist” and looked forward to new freedom in ministry. Clara’s first response to the revelation was, “Oh dear, I thought I was done with the subject of marriage.” Mr. Williams wrote letters to Clara in the weeks that followed the Youngstown revival, and later proposed. They were married in May 1895.

Clara continued ministering as an evangelist for the next several years. Even though neither was ordained, from 1900 to 1920 Clara and her husband served as co-pastors of Wesleyan congregations in Pennsylvania and Ohio.

# Quiet Woman, Exuberant Song

**Lelia Morris (1862–1929)**

To the casual observer Lelia Morris looked like a typical middle-class homemaker of the early 1900s. Her house had always been a center of activity as her children brought friends in for a visit. The Morrises owned the best collection of books in McConnelsville, Ohio, so students often stopped by to work on school assignments. For all but the last year of her 48 years of marriage, Lelia lived in the same non-descript house.

What a first glance did not reveal, however, was that the house was the incubator for a worldwide ministry. This typical middle-class homemaker wrote extraordinary songs which were sung by Christians around the world.

Lelia's father died when she was quite young, so Lelia and her sister worked with their mother in a millinery shop to support the family. When she started piano lessons she practiced at a neighbor's house because the family could not afford an instrument. Lelia began playing the organ for prayer meetings when she was just 12 years old.

Lelia was converted as a young girl. As Lelia looked back on that experience, she said, “When I was ten years old I was led to give my heart to God. It was not a form of giving my heart to God. I knew then that I needed a Saviour. Three different years I went forward to the altar and prayed and prayed, until a man came and laid his hand on my head and said ‘Why, little girl, God is here and ready to forgive your sins’” (Wiess, 7). That marked the beginning of a life lived for Christ.

Lelia’s early years were spent in the Methodist Protestant Church. After her marriage to Charles H. Morris when she was 19, Lelia transferred her membership to her husband’s church, the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Morrises actively supported their congregation. Lelia served as a choir member and a leader in the Sunday school, the Epworth League, and the missionary society.

Lelia’s spiritual life became white-hot in 1892 when she heard holiness preached at Mountain Lake Park, Maryland, the site of a camp meeting founded by holiness proponents in the Methodist Episcopal Church and supported by holiness folks from many denominations. Lelia had read books about the Holy Spirit and heard sermons on the work of the Holy Spirit, but she thought that the cleansing power of God was only “for bishops and preachers and those doing great work for God. I did not suppose it was for me. Only did I find out in the preaching [at Mountain Lake Park] that it was for the young, such as I. I was so glad when I found that I might have the Holy Spirit in my life. So I opened my heart and let the Holy Spirit come in” (Wiess, 12).

That was that. No great spiritual struggle. No

intellectual debate. No battle of the will. Just a personal appropriation by faith of the promise of God. Eight years later she wrote “Sweet Will of God,” a song of consecration and testimony, including the following stanza:

*Thy precious will, O conquering Savior,  
Doth now embrace and compass me;  
All discords hushed, my peace a river,  
My soul a prisoned bird set free.  
Sweet will of God, still fold me closer,  
Till I am wholly lost in Thee.*

When Lelia lost her self in the sanctifying work of Christ, she found the ministry which became her life’s work. The discovery occurred as she worked in her house. She was sitting at her sewing machine making a small garment for one of her children. Suddenly she realized that she was singing a new song, a “message from my heart,” as she called it. Lelia went to her piano and played it, then wrote it down and hid it. Again and again in the following days the cycle repeated: a song would emerge while she busied herself with family responsibilities, she would play it on the piano, write it out, and hide it away. She believed the songs were a gift from God. Lelia said, “I opened my heart and let the Holy Spirit come in, without any thought of writing a song, for I had never tried to; but when I found the Lord, He led me into writing songs” (Wiess, 13).

One day Lelia confided in her mother that she had been writing gospel songs. Her mother asked Lelia to play and sing some of them. Recognizing their high quality and spiritual intensity, Lelia’s mother urged her to show them

to Frank Davis, a church choir director in the area. He liked them. An evangelist holding meetings nearby urged Lelia to submit her songs to a publisher. So the next summer Lelia took several of the songs with her when she went to the camp meeting at Mountain Lake Park.

For several years the song leader at the Mountain Lake Park camp meeting was Henry Gilmour. Henry worked as a dentist in New Jersey for eight months each year and traveled as a song evangelist on the camp meeting circuit for the remaining four months. Gilmour was also a songwriter (“He Brought Me Out,” “The Haven of Rest,” “He Rolled the Sea Away”) and a gospel songbook editor. Very active in gospel music at the end of the 19th century, Gilmour was instrumental in making Lelia’s songs available to the Christian community.

Lelia wrote the song “Let Jesus Come Into Your Heart” while attending the 1898 camp meeting at Mountain Lake Park. On a Sunday morning, the preacher spoke on repentance. Many people responded to the altar call, including a woman in obvious spiritual struggle. As was her custom—Lelia served as an altar worker at the several camp meetings she attended each summer—Lelia went to pray with this woman. Lelia became aware that the woman was trying to barter with God, to give God something in exchange for a spiritual blessing. “Mrs. Morris said, ‘Just now your doubting give o’er.’ Dr. H. L. Gilmour, song leader of the camp meeting, added another phrase, ‘Just now reject Him no more.’ L. H. Baker, the preacher of the sermon, earnestly importuned, ‘Just now throw open the door.’ Mrs. Morris made the last appeal, ‘Let Jesus come into your heart’” (Sanville, 28).

That brief interchange at the altar became the refrain for a gospel song that was completed before the day was over.

Lelia's early songs were militant and revivalistic. A popular example was the song "The Fight is On."

*The fight is on, O Christian soldiers,  
And face to face in stern array,  
With armor gleaming, and colors streaming,  
The right and wrong engage today;  
The fight is on, but be not weary,  
Be strong and in his might hold fast;  
If God be for us, his banner o'er us,  
We'll sing the victor's song at last.*

Evangelists and song evangelists quickly began using Lelia's songs. Many would visit in her home when they were in Ohio. If Lelia was attending a camp meeting or revival service, she often would be invited to sit on the platform. Lelia relished the opportunity to be in these services because she frequently was inspired to write songs after returning home from the meetings.

Lelia's belief in the holiness message is evident in several of her songs. From the quiet prayer of "Nearer, Still Nearer," to the confident testimony of "Sanctifying Power," to the vigorous proclamation of "Holiness unto the Lord," Lelia proclaimed the reality of full salvation. Her biographer wrote, "She had a sincere and strong belief in the subject of holiness, and she was well acquainted with all the Bible references on that subject. She made that a special subject of study and was a willing and ready

speaker on that topic” (Wiess, 33–34).

In 1913 Lelia’s eyesight began to fail; within a year she was totally blind. She continued to write songs, however. At first she would write the music on the 28-foot chalkboard her son installed in her home. Someone would transcribe the music on score paper at a later time. When her sight was totally gone she would simply remember the songs until her daughter, Fanny, came for an annual visit. Lelia would dictate dozens of songs as her daughter wrote them down, both words and music.

As her physical eyesight began to fail, her world vision increased. This concern for world missions had a personal interest, for Lelia’s daughter, Mary, and son-in-law were missionaries to China. Lelia saw this as her highest achievement, being the mother of a missionary. “The greatest thing I have ever done, in my estimation, was the rearing of a daughter to go to China as a missionary.” Several years before, while attending a camp meeting with her young daughter, an invitation was given for those young people to come forward who would obey the Lord if God called them to missionary service. Several responded, including Mary Morris. Then the woman in charge of the invitation said, “I have a message for you mothers in the audience. Would you be willing to let your daughters go?”

Lelia remembered this camp meeting service several years later when she heard that her daughter was going to China. At that time, she said, “Yes, Lord; everything on the altar. She is not mine any more.” Lelia continued, “A great many persons have said [Mary] should be at home with her blind mother. . . . I have been so happy to receive her letters in which she tells of being able to give a message for

the first time to those darkened minds and hearts. I think you will agree with me that this is the best thing I have ever done" (Wiess, 18).

In the last two decades of her life, many of Lelia's songs talked about world missions. She had always been evangelistic; now her songs spoke of those persons in other countries who needed the Lord. From the song "I Want You to Know My Friend" which Lelia wrote for her missionary son-in-law, to the call for workers in "For the Whole, Wide World," to the personal prayer "Here Am I, Send Me," many of the songs Lelia wrote in the last years of her life had a wide-angle view of the Christian's responsibility.

Not only did Lelia send her daughter, but her songs as well. In her lifetime her songs were translated and sung in Africa, India, China, and Korea. Even though she could not see her song as it appeared in an African hymnal she was given, she said, "How good it makes me feel to think that even down in the heart of Africa I have been able to send something to help those people!" (Wiess, 35). The ministry of a quiet woman in a middle-class American neighborhood had reached around the world with the good news of full salvation.

And the song goes on.

*"Holiness unto the Lord" is our watchword and song;*

*"Holiness unto the Lord" as we're marching along.*

*Sing it, shout it, loud and long:*

*"Holiness unto the Lord" now and forever.*

## Other Hymn Writers

**T**here were other women hymn writers in the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement in the 19th century. Many of them wrote songs that are no longer in use. We still sing songs from some of the women, but our knowledge of their personal lives and spiritual pilgrimages is limited. In this section I will briefly describe a few of the other women hymn writers.

**Manie Payne Ferguson (1850–1932)**, along with her husband, Theodore, founded the Los Angeles Mission on November 11, 1886. For a short time Phineas Bresee, the founding General Superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene, was associated with this ministry. From the home base in Los Angeles, other missions were established on the west coast. Haldor Lillenas, the most influential Wesleyan/Holiness songwriter and publisher in the 20th century, was converted at the Peniel Mission in Astoria, Oregon, in 1906. Eventually Peniel Missions were located in Africa, Bolivia, China, Egypt, Guatemala, Hawaii, India, Mexico, the Philippines, and Alaska, and became the forerunner of the present-day World Gospel Mission organization (Pounds, 2).

Manie Ferguson was more outgoing than Theodore and was the guiding force for the expansion of the ministry. After his death in 1920, “Mother Ferguson” continued to direct the work until her death in 1932. Under Manie’s direction, the Peniel Missions sought to provide a ministry for single women. This appears to have been a primary motivation in the growth of the movement. The women usually lived in rented rooms near the rented hall where they conducted evangelistic services. They boldly testified on street corners and in bars and houses of prostitution. All workers were unsalaried, but the local mission paid for most of their expenses. Even the Fergusons were not paid by the mission, but lived on the rental income from three small houses they owned.

Manie Ferguson wrote many poems and hymns. The song for which she is still remembered is “Blessed Quietness” (“Joys are flowing like a river / Since the Comforter has come”). The exact date of its composition is not known, but it was about 1897. Nothing is known about W. S. Marshall, the composer of the hymn tune. The version most used today was arranged by James M. Kirk, a mission worker and musician associated with the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

**Margaret J. Harris (1865–1919)** and her husband, John M. Harris, were very active in holiness revivals and camp meetings. Margaret was a member of the Iowa Holiness Association. The HARRISES were the song evangelists for the General Holiness Convention held in Chicago in 1901. At that time they lived in Evanston, Illinois.

Margaret always played the organ to accompany the

duets she sang with her husband. The Epworth Organ and Piano Company provided an organ without charge for their evangelistic campaigns. They had a commanding presence on the platform, in part because both Margaret and John were six feet two inches tall. John Brasher, in his book *Glimpses*, wrote that the Harrises were “remarkable in always having the right selection at the right moment. Their perfect readiness, together with their fine voices and strong personalities, made them, without disparagement to any, the greatest duet I have ever known” (Brasher, 78).

Margaret was not only a fine musician, but a convincing preacher. “She gave strong messages that were very effective in full altars and in results” (Brasher, 77).

Both Margaret and John were songwriters. John also edited several gospel song collections and was the copyright owner for many songs used throughout the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement in the early decades of the 20th century. John was the editor of *Waves of Glory (No. 1)*, published in 1905 by the Nazarene Publishing Company of Los Angeles, a book which was widely used in Wesleyan/Holiness circles. Of the many songs which Margaret wrote, “I Will Praise Him” and “He Took My Sins Away” are still in use.

**M. Lorene (Hansen) Good (1874–1962)** was on her way to India in 1899, when she saw an old man fall overboard into the Red Sea. The man had worked on ships since he was eleven years old and was on his last voyage before retiring in Australia to live near his daughter. He was mending some nets, holding them above his head, when the ship lurched. Losing his balance, he fell into the sea. Immediately the cry

“man overboard” rang out, and a steward leapt into the water to assist the man. Too late. A lifeboat was dispatched to pluck the old man and his would-be rescuer from the sea. The body of the sailor lay on the first deck for a few hours before it was buried at sea.

The experience had a sobering effect on the passengers. A group of Christians on board decided to hold a gospel service, so they moved among the passengers to announce the meeting on the third deck. The preacher for the service was Miss Lorene Hansen who gave “a message of soul saving truth” (Good, 7).

Lorene’s mother was not surprised when she left the United States for missionary service. After a near-death experience in the hours after Lorene Hansen was born, the young mother had a vision of Jesus standing at the foot of her bed. She promised Jesus that she would give her newborn for Christian service if God would allow her to live and raise the child as a Christian. Lorene’s mother survived, and in April of 1899 Lorene left the New York harbor for missionary service in India.

While in India, Lorene first worked in an effort to print and distribute Christian literature. Later she worked in an orphanage. At this time, about 1901, more than 25,000 children lived in orphanages run by missionaries. The missionaries did what they could, but still hundreds of children died. The task was sometimes discouraging. In this context, Lorene wrote the poem titled “Patience.”

*All day in the Master’s vineyard  
I had labored with heart and hand;*

*And my earnest and strong endeavor  
had finished the labor planned.  
But at nightfall my soul was weary  
with cares of the long, long day,  
For it seemed that my toil was useless,  
and my pearls had been cast away.*

*Then I thought of the rest eternal,  
where our God and angels dwell;  
And I prayed, "O tenderest Father,  
Thou who lovest Thy children so well;  
All day with the cold and thankless  
I have labored as best I may,  
But tonight I am tired and heart-sick,  
now give me Thy rest, I pray."*

*Then down on my spirit was wafted  
the breath of a limitless calm,  
And I felt at once through my weakness  
the strength of the Infinite Arm;  
And a voice said, "Toiler, take courage!  
No labor is useless and vain  
Though thorns spring where roses should brighten  
and weeds where thou searchest for grain.*

*"Thy labor is Christ-like and holy  
if rendered with patience by thee;  
And the love which thou bearest my weak ones,  
I hold as given to Me."  
Then I bowed with humbler praying,  
and "Father, forgive me," I said,*

*"I asked Thee for rest, when I needed  
but patience my pathway to tread."*

While in India, Lorene married Charles Good, a widower involved in famine relief. When his health failed because of what is now called compassion fatigue, Lorene brought her new family to her home in Nebraska where they lived the remainder of their lives. Lorene was a charter member of the Grand Island, Nebraska, Church of the Nazarene.

Lorene wrote several poems, but only one poem is known to have been published as a song. "Sweeping This Way" is a revival song which was published by Haldor Lillenas in 1927. The tune was written by Judson Van DeVenter for another song which was copyrighted in 1895.

**Kittie L. Suffield (1884–1972)** wanted to be a concert artist from the time she started to study music as a young child. Kittie was a talented musician, both as a coloratura soprano and a pianist. Her ambitions changed, however, after her conversion at age 19 when she gave up her concert ambitions and began evangelistic work. For a time before her marriage, Kittie traveled with Mae Taylor.

During a trip, Kittie was on a train that became stuck in a heavy snowstorm. Sensing that the passengers were in danger of freezing to death, a man set out to find help. Fred Suffield was awakened by the man pounding on his farmhouse door that cold winter's night. Fred dressed, lit a lantern, and went with the man to guide the train passengers to his house. Kittie later wrote Fred a thank you letter in gratitude for his kindness. The correspondence

continued and eventually they were married.

After their marriage, Fred and Kittie Suffield traveled as evangelists. Fred was converted under the ministry of the father of George Beverly Shea, a Wesleyan pastor. When the Suffields began their evangelistic work, Pastor Shea would often invite them to hold services for his congregation. During one of those revival services, George Beverly Shea was converted (Shea, 36–37).

When Bev Shea was 17 years old, the Suffields invited him to join them at a month-long, Methodist camp meeting in Westport, Ontario. With Kittie playing the piano, Bev sang his first solo in public. He was terribly embarrassed when his voice cracked on a high note. Devastated, he resolved never again to sing in public. Kittie gently encouraged him to try once more, this time in a lower key. Bev sang another solo before the camp meeting ended.

Kittie wrote many songs, including “God Is Still on the Throne,” a song she wrote in Portland, Oregon, in 1929. At least one small songbook of her songs was published. Another one of her compositions which remains in use is “Little Is Much When God Is in It.”

**Noms de plume.** When looking through songbooks from the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement, many other women’s names are found. Not all names indicate that the song was composed by a woman, however, since it was common for writers to use a nom de plume. For example, the song “Pentecostal Power” lists Charlotte G. Homer as the author. The hymn was actually written by Charles H. Gabriel (1856–1932). Haldor Lillenas (1885–1959) used the noms de plume of Virginia Rose Golden and Ferne Winters

for some of his songs. Fanny Crosby probably holds the record for the number of noms de plume used by one writer. Scholars believe that publishers used more than two hundred pseudonyms for Fanny Crosby in an effort to camouflage the fact that she had written a majority of the songs in some of their books.

**Fanny J. Crosby (1820–1915)** deserves special mention in our discussion of songwriters in the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement, although an explicit reference to a personal sanctification experience or holiness doctrine has not been discovered. In hymnology books Fanny is most often linked with revivalists such as Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey, and rightfully so because of her great involvement in their work. She also wrote many songs with leaders in gospel music like Robert Lowry, a Baptist pastor, and William Doane, a Baptist layman who was active in the Sunday school movement. What is often ignored is Fanny's contact with the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement.

The Sunday school songs of William Bradbury were the forerunners of the gospel songs which flourished in late 19th-century revivalism. But another tradition was emerging within Methodist and Holiness circles. Edmund Lorenz wrote, "A movement entirely independent of that of Bradbury, Lowry, and Doane, which (though Bradbury was a Methodist, at his death fell into exclusively Baptist hands) grew out of the more devout side of the 'Spiritual' among the Methodists of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and had its center at Philadelphia and Ocean Grove, where a great camp-meeting was and is annually held. The pioneers of this movement were Rev. J. H. Stockton, W. G.

Fischer, and especially William J. Kirkpatrick, who as a mere boy had arranged and harmonized a large number of current ‘Spirituals’” (Lorenz, 335). While most people were active in one or the other, Fanny Crosby participated in both movements.

Fanny was a friend of Phoebe and Walter Palmer, sometimes visiting Ocean Grove, New Jersey, as their guest. One of Crosby’s best loved hymns, “Blessed Assurance,” was written for a melody written by Phoebe Palmer Knapp, the daughter of Phoebe and Walter Palmer. Phoebe Palmer Knapp was appalled with the conditions in which Fanny lived and tried to convince her publishers to give Fanny more than the usual three or four dollars per song. Knapp’s advocacy never produced the desired result.

Fanny wrote several songs with William Kirkpatrick, the most prominent publisher in the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement as the 19th century evolved into the 20th century. In his brief history of the music of the Church of the Nazarene, Fred Mund states that Kirkpatrick’s “influence was greatly felt through those early years. Although not a Nazarene, he did much to give the church a spiritual heritage from which it could grow” (Mund, 11). Fanny first met Kirkpatrick at the Holiness camp meeting at Ocean Grove in 1877. She visited “Kirkie” at his home in Philadelphia on several occasions.

Fanny Crosby was also very involved with The Salvation Army. One time when Fanny was in Boston, she was scheduled to speak at a Salvation Army meeting. In front of the house in which she was staying, a brass band gathered to play several hymns Fanny had written. After the prelude, the band organized as a marching unit and

escorted Fanny to the meeting hall while playing “Rescue the Perishing.” About two thousand people heard Fanny speak that evening.

At the end of her life, Fanny’s concept of her vocation was not that of a celebrated gospel songwriter, but that of a city mission worker. In an interview that was published in the March 24, 1908, issue of the New Haven Register, Fanny said that her chief occupation was working in missions. Sometimes she would address those gathered at the mission service, but often Fanny would ask God to direct her to the person with whom she could have a redemptive conversation.

Many of Fanny’s hymns emerged from her involvement in the city missions. For example, in her book *Memories of Eighty Years*, Fanny wrote,

“As I was addressing a large company of working men one hot August evening, the thought kept forcing itself upon my mind that some mother’s boy must be rescued that very night or perhaps not at all. So I requested that, if there was any boy present, who had wandered away from mother’s teaching, he would come to the platform at the conclusion of the service. A young man of eighteen came forward and said, ‘Did you mean me? I have promised my mother to meet her in heaven; but as I am now living that will be impossible.’ We prayed for him; he finally arose with a new light in his eyes; and exclaimed triumphantly, ‘Now, I can meet mother in heaven; for I have found her God.’

“A few days before, Mr. Doane had sent me the subject ‘Rescue the Perishing,’ and while I sat there that evening the line came to me, Rescue the perishing, care for the dying.

“I could think of nothing else that night. When I arrived at my home I went to work on it at once; and before I retired the entire hymn was ready for a melody” (Crosby, 144–145).

Of the several city missions with which Fanny Crosby worked, several were operated by proponents of Wesleyan/Holiness doctrine, including Emma Whittmore’s Doors of Hope and Samuel Hadley’s Cremorne Mission.

And the world still sings Fanny Crosby’s call to consecrated Christian living.

*Consecrate me now to Thy service, Lord,  
By the power of grace divine.  
Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope,  
And my will be lost in Thine.*

## Postlude

In the preface of his magnum opus as a hymnal editor, *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (1780), John Wesley wrote, “That which is of infinitely more moment than the spirit of poetry, is the spirit of piety. . . . I would recommend [this collection] to every truly pious reader as a means of raising or quickening the spirit of devotion, of confirming his faith, of enlivening his hope, and of kindling or increasing his love to God and man. When poetry thus keeps its place, as the handmaid of piety, it shall attain, not a poor perishable wreath, but a crown that fadeth not away.”

As spiritual descendants of Wesley, the women hymn writers of the 19th-century Wesleyan/Holiness Movement shared his goal. They did not write merely for aesthetic pleasure, but because the fire of God was burning in their souls. They had experienced the saving and sanctifying work of God and sought to express the glory of God’s presence in their songs. They found a spiritual satisfaction that they wanted others to experience.

Their songs were only one portion of a life of Christian service. Whether preaching or teaching or pastoring or

singing a newly composed song, these women wanted, most of all, to further the cause of Christ. And their ministries extend beyond their lifetimes as we still sing their songs of faith.

*Hallelujah! I have found Him—  
Whom my soul so long has craved!  
Jesus satisfies my longings;  
Through His blood I now am saved.*

## Acknowledgements

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To read more about these and other hymn writers of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement, see *The Birth of a Hymn: Spiritual Biographies of 20 Hymn Writers and the Experiences That Inspired Them* by Keith Schwanz (Lillenas Publishing Company, 1997).

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