

By the 18th century, musicians began to blend melodies and harmonies from the popular secular songs of the day. Hymns became more popular and congregations were encouraged to join the singing. Here are a few of the stories behind the hymns and the writers:

Martin Luther wrote “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” during the protestant reformation. He based this from Psalm 46 and once said, “After theology, there is nothing that can be placed on the same level with music. It drives out the devil and makes people cheerful. It is a gift that God gave to birds and to men. We need to remove the singing from the domain of monks and priests and set the laity to singing. It is a way to publicly express our love for God.”.

Imagine a slave ship in 1746 who’s captain is known for his debauchery, vulgarity and blasphemy. Someone gave him a book to read on the life of Christ and he soon gave his heart to the Lord. This captain, John Newton, became a Pastor and hymn writer. His most famous was “Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.”.

John and Charles Wesley, founders of the Methodist church were well known for their theology and preaching . Among hundreds of hymns, in 1749 Charles wrote a great hymn entitled, “O for a thousand tongues to sing my great redeemers praise.”.

During the preaching campaign in 1886 by D.L. Moody, a young man stood to testify. He said, “I’m not quite sure about everything, but I am going to trust and I’m going to obey”. From this testimony came the hymn by John Sammis titled, “Trust and Obey”.

A man named Joseph Scriven learned that his bride to be had drowned the day before their wedding. He spent his life in Canada helping the needy and was known as “The Good Samaritan of Port Hope”. On a visit to see his sick mother he penned some words of comfort in a poem that soon became a hymn titled, “What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear”.

Fanny Crosby was a blind worshiper in the late 1880’s. In spite of her handicap she wrote 9,000 hymns and often spoke of the desire to be with the Lord and see Him face to face. She wrote “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine”.

C. Austin Myles sat in his darkroom developing film with little to no light. While patiently waiting for the process, he remembered the story from John chapter 10 where Mary had met Jesus in the garden. She mistook Him for a gardener but soon cried out “Rabbonni” (meaning master). This encounter became real for him as he wrote, “I come to the garden alone...” “and He walks with me and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own”.