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# THE LANGUAGE OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN HYMN-WRITERS: INTERCULTURAL INSIGHTS

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## 1. Introductory Remarks

The aim of this paper is to analyse the imagery and metaphorical language used by women hymn writers in nineteenth-century Britain and America in order to shed light on the important role of such writers on the one hand and the enduring popularity of their work on the other. Until quite recently very little attention had been given to the important social, moral and spiritual role of female hymn writers especially on this side of the Atlantic. Interest in hymns was almost exclusively limited to hymn singing and musical accompaniment rather than the actual social background of the hymns and their literary value. At the most, people were aware of the religious purpose of each individual hymn but very little was actually known about the authors and their social purpose. Interest in hymn writing began to surface in the 1990s with particular attention to female authors in Britain and America from the turn of the century (Moody 1999).

As noted by Watson (2003), there is, in effect, a fundamental difference between the early acceptance of hymn singing in nineteenth-century America and the later start in Britain. While America "was marked by a strong hymnody almost from the beginning" (Watson 2003: 358), nineteenth-century Britain had a much slower start. Hymn-singing had become extremely popular in Methodist and other nonconformist meetings on a par with American camp-meeting spirituals in frontier areas, but it was still not allowed in Anglican services as late as the 1820s[1] due to the general belief within the established church that "only metrical psalms had scriptural and legal authority" (Sadie 2001, vol. 12: 32). In the 1840s and 1850s, hymn-books began to appear for those who wished to include hymns in services but it was only in 1861 that *Hymns Ancient and Modern*[2] was published and that hymn-writing really began to flourish (cf. Watson 2003: 288).

Once hymns had been accepted as a form of worship in the Church of England, however, the second half of the nineteenth century saw such an increase in hymn-writing

[1] The Archbishop of York withdrew Cotterill's *A Selection of Psalms And Hymns For The Use Of Saint Paul's Church In Sheffield*, which had been enlarged to include 367 hymns and 150 metrical psalms and it was only a year later that he approved of the 146 hymns in the 1820 edition (cf. Baker and Welsby 1993: 79).

[2] It contained hymns from different denominations including "the hymns of Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts, which were beginning to shake off the notoriety attached to them from their associations with Methodists and Congregationalists" (Watson 20023: 288) besides two hymns from America. It was in this period, too, that Roman Catholic hymnists such as Faber and Caswall were adapted so they could be included in Protestant hymnals (cf. Scholes 1970: 501).

and translations[3] that the period came to be known as "the golden age of hymnody" (Bradley 1989: 3). Many women hymn-writers and translators of hymns including Catherine Winkworth, translator of German Reformation hymns, Jane Montgomery Campbell, translator of an eighteenth-century German harvest song and Cecil Frances Alexander**,** author of hymns and a verse translation of 'St. Patrick's Breastplate', found their way into hymnals of all denominations. Though interesting, the scope is so vast that I have had to limit my search to the actual writing of hymns rather than their translation and the focus of my analysis of the recurrent metaphors and images found in the hymns from both sides of the Atlantic has been limited to images drawn from nature.

A proliferation of hymn writing was made possible in America thanks to "the consciousness of the evils of slavery, and the Civil War fought to remedy that evil" (Watson 2003: 358). In such circumstances, women such as Julia Ward Howe were inspired by these events to write their hymns. Howe's 'Battle Hymn of the Republic'(1862) is no doubt one of the most anthologised of American hymns written during the war itself but the works of other women writers are equally valued for their social and moral purpose. In England, on the other hand, though there was increased awareness of social injustice especially amongst the Evangelicals, there was no major turmoil. As a consequence, we find the right terrain for a stream of hymns of adoration, "sometimes celebrating the God of the natural world" (Watson 2003: 235). Fears of the ugly sprawl of industrialization no doubt induced people to write hymns in celebration of the beauty of nature, and hymns such as Cecil Frances Alexander's 'All things, bright and beautiful' are still very popular today for their simplicity of language and are still relevant to conservationists. The only hymns with a social purpose appear to be the missionary ones written mainly by men. Heber's 'From Greeneland's icy mountains'(1819) and Oakley's 'Hills of the north, rejoice' (1864) illustrate a "fervent belief in the need to convert the world to Christianity" (Watson 2003: 243), so important during Queen Victoria's reign, and are often modified or totally excluded from hymnals today because of their racial overtones (cf. Reeves & Worsley 1989: 170; Bradley 1998: 128).[4]

From the outset, then, it may appear that hymnody in the two varieties of English has diverging objectives, the one seeking social and moral rectitude, the other celebrating God's creation and showing missionary zeal. However, a close analysis of imagery and metaphor in a selection of popular women hymn writers from both sides of the Atlantic will illustrate how similar their objectives are and demonstrate the important role of women within a broader religious perspective.

## 2. The Social Purpose of Hymn Writing

The fact that Anne Steele, the first woman hymn-writer to be widely anthologised in England, published her hymns under the name of 'Theodosia' ('gift of God') (cf. Watson 2003: 147) no doubt reflects her piety; however, what is important for our discourse is that she was probably forced to write with a pseudonym as it was not normal to find women writers in the mid-eighteenth century and that she had become a prototype of the woman hymn-writer living a life of sorrow in the eyes of many a critic (cf. Watson 2003: 163).

[3] John Keble, John Henry Newman, Isaac Williams and John Mason Neale are a small fraction of the names of translators of the period. Their translations include hymns of ancient and medieval times as well as German hymns of the Reformation (cf. Watson 2003: 61).

[4] One particular exception, a hymn written by a woman, Mary Ann Thomson's 'O Sion, haste' (1868), has no racist overtones and is one of the most enduring missionary hymns (cf. Rutler 1998: 209).

Her suffering when her fiancé drowned on the morning of her wedding is indeed reflected in the titles of several hymns of hers;[5] however, it is not for this reason that the works of later women hymn writers should be judged so simplistically. Many ensuing meditations including Anna Laetitia Waring's *Hymns and Meditations* (1850) do indeed reflect a certain sense of inquietude and draw heavily on the weather metaphor. Many women hymn-writers find reliance on the God who stilled the storm but many were also written with a social purpose in mind. The last verse of Waring's hymn 'In heavenly love abiding' is particularly revealing of her own "sense of instability of earthly happiness [… as] figured in the weather for the journey of life – dark clouds, followed by bright skies" (Watson 2003: 332), but it is impossible to understand the full potential of this hymn without comprehending its social context. Waring devoted her life to prisoners and ex-prisoners (cf. Barr 2004: 42) and is no less important, therefore, than the work of Elizabeth Fry who "tried to introduce a new spirit of humanity into British prisons" (Hill 1977: 228). If we read the whole hymn with the knowledge that it was dedicated to prisoners inside grim Victorian jails we can understand the strength of the weather image.

In heavenly love abiding,
no change my heart shall fear;
and safe is such confiding,
for nothing changes here.
The storm may roar without me,
my heart may low be laid,
but God is round about me,
and can I be dismayed?

Wherever he may guide me,
no want shall turn me back;
my shepherd is beside me,
and nothing can I lack.
His wisdom ever waketh,
his sight is never dim,
he knows the way he taketh,
and I will walk with him.

Green pastures are before me,
Which yet I have not seen;
Bright skies will soon be o'er me,
Where the dark clouds have been:
My hope I cannot measure,
My path to life is free;
My Saviour has my treasure,
And he will walk with me
(in Watson 2003: 332).

This trust in God is also reflected in hymns written by American women hymn-writers such as Mary Artemesia Lathbury. The first and last verses of her hymn 'Day is dying in the west' (1877):

Day is dying in the west;

[5] 'Alas, What Hourly Dangers Rise', 'Dear Refuge of My Weary Soul', 'Hear, Gracious Lord, My Humble Moan', 'So Fades the lovely Blooming Flower' and 'Why Sinks My Weak Desponding Mind?' are but a selection of such titles.

Heaven is touching earth with rest:
Wait and worship while the night
Sets her evening lamps alight
Through all the sky.

*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts!*
*Heaven and earth are full of Thee!*
*Heaven and earth are praising Thee,*
*Our Lord most high!*

When forever from Thy sight
Pass the stars, the day, the night,
Lord of angels, on our eyes
Let eternal morning rise
And shadows end
(in Moody 1999: 3)

are inspired by the beauty of the sun setting over lake Chautauqua and evoke the theme of eternity, which is frequently found in women's hymns. Though there is little description of the lake itself, the setting is congenial to such reflections and gives a comforting message of hope for everyone that beyond evening is morning and that beyond death is eternal life. Lathbury wrote for the Chautauqua Movement, a religious and cultural movement in late nineteenth-century America, and has even been described as the "Poet Laureate and Saint of Chautauqua" (McKim 1993: 233). Her hymns are indeed impregnated with love of God and all his creation and appear in hymnals for workers. Traditional biblical metaphor transpires in 'O Shepherd of the nameless fold' where the shepherd is seen tending his "happy fold" but it is the sheer beauty of nature around the lake that inspires her to make her "thoughts rise higher than the stars / And soar beyond the trees" (www.hymntime.com/htm/) in a number of hymns including 'The World Within' (1903). However, God's presence is felt not only in all aspects of nature "from the low glow-worm to the star" (in Moody 1999: 4) but also in the working-place as represented by the loom in her hymn 'A Song of Hope' and it is precisely this knowledge that He is ever present that instils encouragement in workers – women and men alike.

## 3. Inner Conflict and Songs of Adoration

In a sense, two very popular hymn writers, the American Fanny Crosby, who was blind from infancy (cf. Osbeck 2002: 12), and the British Charlotte Elliott whose hymns were composed as a result of her frustration after becoming an invalid at the age of thirty could be considered the prototypes of the nineteenth-century hymn-writing woman, living a quiet life and enduring sorrow that we mentioned in section two. Two very similar stories of suffering and joyful acceptance of their lot. Though their hymns were composed as a result of suffering, they have given much comfort to people and were very popular in revivalist meetings and evangelical campaigns in the twentieth century worldwide. They are even included in the BBC *Songs of Praise-The Nation's Favourite Hymns* (Barr 2004).

The simplicity of Charlotte Elliott's hymns has a particularly poignant appeal. If we read verses three to five of the hymn 'Just as I am, without one plea'(1835):

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need, in thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come!
(in Watson 2003: 270)

with the knowledge that she lived very close to the sea and that it was composed after a sleepless night because she was unable to help her brother – an Evangelical vicar – who was organizing a bazaar to raise money for charity (cf. Watson 2003: 270), the image of the sea gains momentum. The hymn is based on John 6:35, 37: "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never drive away" but it was the words of comfort that an evangelist vicar had used in reply to her spiritual doubts after becoming an invalid for life that came to mind "as she lay in despair and [...] began to write" (Barr 2004: 45). The image of the 'troubled sea' in 'tossed about' unobtrusively depicts her state of confusion and sense of inadequacy and what wins through is "the sense of forgiveness and acceptance that she now knew God offered her" (Barr 2004: 45).

Likewise, Fanny Crosby's hymn 'To God be the glory, great things he hath done!' (1870), from the other side of the Atlantic, is simple in its ideas and extremely emotional, in keeping with the religious gatherings organized by the Evangelicals Sankey and Moody (cf. Watson 2003: 377) which did a lot to popularise it. The refrain:

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son;
and give him the glory – great things he hath done!

nicely reflects her sense of adoration. In actual fact, Frances Jane Crosby van Alstyne – like her British counterpart – was an extremely prolific writer having over eight thousand hymns to her name and was considered "the most important writer of gospel hymn texts in the 19th century" (Sadie 2001, vol. 6: 722).[6] The hymns of both authors are remembered for their trust in God, for their simplicity and adoration. However, the metaphor and references to colour in two hymns written by Crosby in her advancing years are particularly moving. Verse three of 'Some Day the Silver Cord Will Break'(1898):

Some day, when fades the golden sun
Beneath the rosy-tinted West,
My blessed Lord will say, "Well done!"
And I shall enter into rest.
And I shall see Him face to face,
And tell the story saved by grace.

[6] Not everybody appreciated the Evangelical approach used by Billy Graham in his 'Hour of Decision' broadcasts. The first two lines of 'Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine/O what a foretaste of glory divine! have been parodied as "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine/I had an experience at a quarter to nine" (quoted in Bradley 1989: 66).

and verses one and three of ‘Safe in the Arms of Jesus’(1868):

Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast,
There by His love o’er-shaded,
Sweetly my soul shall rest.
Hark! ‘Tis the voice of angels,
Borne in a song to me,
Over the fields of Glory,
Over the jasper sea.

Jesus, my heart’s dear refuge,
Jesus has died for me,
Firm on the rock of ages
Ever my trust shall be.
Here let me wait with patience,
Wait till the night is o’er,
Wait till I see the morning
Break on the golden shore
(in Pitt n.d.: 3).

cannot fail to bring joy and comfort to the sick and the aged.

A hint of unhappiness transpires in the works of the occasional British woman hymn-writer. In Dora Greenwell’s ‘And art thou come with us to dwell’ (1869), for instance, though the earth rejoices at the coming of Christ to free the world from its “spiritual winter” (Watson 2003: 331), there is also a hint of regret. Indeed, in the celebration of the coming of spring, the nature imagery very subtly reveals her inner conflict and unhappiness. We can see in the flower image in verse four, for instance, that what “unfolds”, like a flower in spring, is “All, all that life hath long repressed” (in Watson 2003: 330). This certainly reflects the unhappiness of the eighteen years Greenwell had lived in isolation with her widowed mother who had discouraged all forms of social intercourse (cf. Watson 2003: 331). However, it is Greenwell’s full trust in God that wins through in her hymns. The imagery of spring and rebirth, which emerges throughout this particular hymn, has a universal appeal and illustrates how the author looks through her own pain to a world in which God is ever present and “the humblest flower hath leave to blow”. In verse two, the flower image emerges in the form of a “rose/In triumph o’er the grieving thorn” and again in verse three where everything will “have its hour of life and bloom” (cf. appendix, hymn no.1).

## 4. Submissiveness vs. feminism

Though the feminist movement was in full swing in both nineteenth-century Britain and America, hymn-writing is not used as a means of championing feminist ideals on both sides of the Atlantic. It has been pointed out that the last verse of Christina Rossetti’s hymn ‘In the bleak mid-winter’(c. 1872):

What can I give him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man
I would do my part;

Yet what I can I give him –
Give my heart.

can be interpreted as an important feminist message because it was written when "women were largely excluded from the professions and from higher education" (Cosnett 1995 in Watson 2003: 334). It should, however, be pointed out that hymns written by British women do not normally have such a message and that Rossetti herself has often been labelled for her religious sentiment according to which pious women of the time willingly accept "the lowest place" in society and often "claim, as if by sexual right, the imagery of Christian humility" (Moers 1978: 244). It is possible to interpret this work as an appeal to feminism, therefore, only in so far as Rossetti wrote this as a poem and not as a hymn. The main appeal of this hymn today lies in the beauty of the nativity scene and the metaphorical implications of Christ's coming to save the world "In the bleak mid-winter" when "Frosty wind made moan, / Earth stood hard as iron, / Water like a stone; Snow had fallen, snow on snow, / Snow on snow, / In the bleak mid-winter, / Long ago" (in Watson 2003: 333).

In America, there is no reticence upon claiming women's rights in hymns. On the contrary, hymns such as Frances Dana Gage's 'One hundred years hence, what a change will be made' (1852) reveal that moralizing and feminism can go hand in hand:

All cheating and fraud will be laid on the shelf,
Men will not get drunk, nor be bound up in self,
But all live together, good neighbors and friends,
As Christian folks ought to, a hundred years hence.

Then woman, man's partner, man's equal shall stand,
While beauty and harmony govern the land,
To think for oneself will be no offense,
The world will be thinking a hundred years hence

(in Navias 1975: 55).

It does appear from a perusal of collections of hymns that American women hymn-writers often tend to include the socio-political themes of the day in their hymns rather than the more universal themes found in British collections and one is indeed tempted to think their British counterparts, by comparison, were meek and mild. According to Watson, Keble's *The Christian Year* (1827) was an extremely popular book, which provided nineteenth-century readers with a poem for every Sunday of the year. As this book went through many an edition, inspiring generations of Anglicans and people of other denominations to aim for a quiet acceptance of their lot, and for simplicity and gentleness (cf. Watson 2003: 254), it do doubt played an important role in keeping women's socio-political struggles separate from their religious practices and it is probably for this reason that British hymnody has such a universal appeal.

This does not mean, however, that all nineteenth-century hymns are still appreciated in their entirety. Parts of hymns such as verse three of Cecil Frances Alexander's 'All Things Bright and Beautiful' (1848):

The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them, high or lowly,
And ordered their estate.

are omitted in most modern hymn books today. If in the nineteenth century, the sentiment

expressed was desirable, it was even "banned from use in all schools run by the Inner London Education Authority in 1982 because of its inegalitarian sentiments" (Bradley 1989: 28).

## 5. The didactic aim of hymn writing

In effect, modern versions of nineteenth-century hymns are often incomplete and it is frequently the nature image and female sentimentality that are usually forfeited. Watson has pointed out that modern hymn-books tend to omit nature imagery in hymns of writers such as Frederick Faber (cf. 2003: 298) and Henry Alford (cf. 2003: 307) because they are deemed too emotional and unsuitable for modern usage[7]. It is not surprising, therefore, that hymns of British female writers such as Alexander's have come down to us in abbreviated forms. Verse six of 'All things bright and beautiful'(1848):

> The tall trees in the greenwood,
> The meadows where we play,
> The rushes by the water
> We gather every day;

can, no doubt, be considered irrelevant to the lives of modern city children (cf. Watson 2003: 283) and has been omitted in most hymnals. However, it should be remembered that Alexander's hymns have a didactic purpose and that this particular hymn was written in order to explain 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth' in the Apostles' Creed to children. Alexander was, moreover, the wife of a Protestant Archbishop of Armagh and strongly influenced by the Oxford Movement which did much to bring back the medieval freshness of imagery drawn from nature and to reach out to the aesthetic needs of the people[8]. The fact, therefore, that she draws heavily on nature should be considered in its historical context and valued accordingly. The simplicity of language used in praise and wonder at the beauty of creation is appropriate both for the didactic purpose and for the needs of city-dwellers living in "the shadow of industrialization"

[7] Faber's 'Hark! hark, my soul! Angelic songs are swelling', for instance, is short of two verses which according to Watson are "an integral part of the hymn: the angelic songs are heard (but only if we listen) over green fields and across the sea, in a world through which we travel in darkness and with difficulty"(2003: 298). However excessive the lines "Cheer up, my soul! faith's moonbeams softly glisten/Upon the breast of life's most troubled sea" may seem, "Faber is [simply] cheering on the soul, recognizing the troubles of life, and holding out the promise of the final homecoming" (2003: 298).

Even Alford's 'Come, ye thankful people, come', which "skilfully uses the idea of harvest as a metaphor for the Christian life" (Watson 2003: 307) has been modified. The final verse: "Even so, Lord, quickly come,/Bring thy final harvest home:/Gather thou thy people in,/Free from sorrow, free from sin;/There, for ever purified,/In thy garner to abide:/Come, with all thine angels, come,/Raise the glorious harvest home!" (Watson 2003: 306) has various versions. In *Hymns Ancient and Modern* we have "Come then, Lord of mercy, come,/Bid us sing Thy Harvest-home:/Let Thy Saints be gather'd in,/Free from sorrow, free from sin;/All upon the golden floor/Praising Thee for evermore:/Come, with all Thine Angels, come;/Bid us sing Thy Harvest-home" (n.382) whereas in the *English Hymnal* we have 'Then, thou Church Triumphant come'(Watson 2003: 307).

[8] Indeed, this tendency to describe idyllic landscapes in hymns and to represent the good shepherd with the lamb on stained-glass windows in churches in nineteenth-century England, already to be considered anachronistic during the Victorian Age (cf. Drain 1989: 440), is no doubt a counter movement against ugly industrialization and scientific rationalism. This trend continues well into twentieth century with Eleanor Farjeon's 'Morning has broken?, 'People look East' and 'A Rhyme for Saint Nicholas' which have the same poignancy as Cecil Frances Alexander's in the nineteenth century.

(Drain 1989: 444) and is, according to Bradley, "still relevant in our conservation conscious-age" (1989: 28) (cf. appendix, hymn no. 2).

The fact that 'There is a green hill far away'(1848), another popular hymn of hers, has been criticised for the unreality of the landscape may be due in part to the interpretation of 'without' in the following verse:

There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified
Who died to save us all
(in Watson 2003: 287).

In many hymn books, the second line has indeed been amended to 'Outside a city wall' in accordance to modern usage. However, this, too, is included in Alexander's *Hymns for Little Children* (1848), the didactic purpose of the hymn focusing on the Crucifixion and the phrase 'Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried' in the Apostles' Creed. The idyllic landscape is remote but in consonance with her Irish surroundings and quite frankly, whichever preposition is used, the message remains unaltered.

Another hymn of hers 'Once in royal David's city'(1848) has been criticised for its allusions to Christian teachings in the words "Christian children all must be/ Mild, obedient, good as he" (cf. Watson 2003: 285-286). However, it must be remembered that it was first published in Alexander's collection of *Hymns for Little Children* (1848), which she "wrote after overhearing a group of her godchildren complaining of the dreariness of the catechism" (Keyte and Parrott 1992: 149). This hymn celebrates the magic of Christmas and has, above all, the didactic purpose of explaining the Incarnation as expounded in the phrase 'who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary' in the Apostles' Creed (cf. Watson 2003: 285). The narrative is simple and story-like and cannot fail to reach the hearts of people of all generations. Furthermore, this hymn – as indeed most of her hymns – are included in hymn books of most denominations and have been translated into numerous languages (cf. Jones 1902: 280).

## 6. The Church and Feminism

Some hymns written by British women seem to go beyond the didactic Catechistic purpose of Frances Alexander's and to have a more universal missionary appeal and what I purport to do in this section is to illustrate that hymns such as Frances Havergal's 'Lord, speak to me, that I may speak' (1872) and 'Take my life, and let it be'(1878) can even be considered precursory messages of the movement for the long march towards priesthood of women. Verse three of the former hymn:

O strengthen me, that, while I stand
Firm on the rock, and strong in thee,
I may stretch out a loving hand
To wrestlers with the troubled sea.

can be interpreted both literally and metaphorically. The literalness lies in its allusions to the fact that Havergal, unlike her weaker counterparts, is a strong swimmer. The images of the 'rock' and the 'wrestlers with the troubled sea', have a twofold purpose, therefore, and can be interpreted both in the traditional biblical sense to reflect the strength people can find in God in accordance with line two of Psalm 18 'The Lord is my rock, and my

fortress, and my deliverer', and on a personal level, in her desire to reach out to those less fortunate than herself (cf. Watson 2003: 327). Verse four of the same hymn:

O teach me, Lord, that I may teach
The precious things thou dost impart;
And wing my words, that they may reach
The hidden depths of many a heart.

allows us to go one step further and understand the full force of her missionary zeal as the 'rock' can now refer to Peter, disciple and founder of the Church.

The other hymn:

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 treasure-store;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for thee
(in Watson 2003: 328)

is also very personal in its allusions to her athletic qualities (verse two) and her talent as a singer (verse three) and the quotation 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service' (Roman 12: 1), often accompanying the hymn certainly reflects Havergal's desire to consecrate her life to the Lord. However, it is the image of the 'treasure-store' in the final verse that gives the hymn a feminist appeal. No doubt, it refers to the 'alabaster box of ointment' used by the woman sinner to anoint Jesus' feet in Luke 7: 36-50. In Havergal's private letters, there are references to her pleasure in being able to convert people (cf. Watson 2003: 329) and it seems only fair, therefore, to draw attention to the author's awareness that Christ's disciples were attended by women such as Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Susanna (cf. Luke 8: 1-3) and to appreciate the hymn for its subtle feminist approach.

It may appear to be premature to collocate the hymn within the church feminist movement which only seriously began at the end of the nineteenth century. Though

women had been sent to Africa by the Church Missionary Society as early as 1820 their work as missionaries as such was not fully acknowledged as they were only considered adjuncts to their husbands in their missions (cf. Webster 1994: 9-10). The Anglo-Catholic Oxford Movement and the extension of education to women during the nineteenth century made the religious orders for women become a reality by the end of the century when many sisterhoods and deaconess communities had already been formed. However, if Havergal's hymn 'Lord, speak to me, that I may speak' is to be fully appreciated, we must bear in mind that the actual movement for the ordination of women only began a century later in 1979 (cf. Webster 1994: 9) [9], and that it was only their domestic and socially-conditioned work that was recognized by men until then. In America, women ministers could only be found amongst the Unitarians and Universalists but the call to ministry can be noted in the preaching and hymns of writers such as Lathbury who consecrated her works to God (cf. Wells 1945: 244) and Julia Ward Howe who actually fought for many a social cause including supporting women in the ministry (cf. Moody 1999: 5).

## 7. Concluding remarks

In truth, in nineteenth-century Britain, it was still normal for women's hymns to remain unpublished until after their deaths whereas the hymns of their American counterparts were acclaimed in their life-time. Elizabeth Cecilia Clephane's 'Beneath the Cross of Jesus' was only published in 1872, three years after she had passed away (cf. Watson 2003: 325), for instance, whereas hymns of Unitarians such as Julia Ward Howe[10] and Frances Dana Gage were already popular in their life-time thanks to the immediacy of their socio-political commitment. It is not for this reason, however, that the message of British women's hymns are of less importance for their strong moral and religious implications. They may not mix political and religious aims and be so boisterous as Julia Ward Howe's 'battle hymn', 'Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord'(1862), (cf. appendix, hymn no. 3) sung to the tune of 'John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave', which "has become a virtually indispensable feature of national parades and presidential inaugurations in the United States" (Bradley 1989: 267)[11] but they certainly reveal quiet religious commitment. Julia Ward Howe "drew on several powerful biblical images: the trampling of the grapes of wrath (Isaiah 63:3), the crushing of the serpent (Genesis 3:15) and the idea of Christ being born in the beauty of the lilies, from the Song of Solomon" (Bradley 1989: 268); however, the imagery used in British hymnody is just as moving for its universal appeal and is equally dependent upon biblical scenes. Mrs Love Maria Willis's 'Father, hear the prayer we offer'(1864) from America and Cecil Frances Alexander's 'Jesus calls us: o'er the tumult/Of our life's wild restless sea'(1852) from Britain indeed illustrate the similarity of objectives and use of imagery in hymns from both sides of the Atlantic. In effect, in neither case are these hymn writers

[9] It was, in actual fact, only voted by the Church of England's General Synod in 1992 (cf. Webster 1994: 9).
[10] Julia Ward Howe was a Unitarian lay preacher and founding member of the American Suffrage Association.
[11] In Britain the only hymn to be used for political reasons is Blake's 'And did those feet in ancient time'. Though written by a man, it was used at a thanksgiving service by the supporters of Women's Suffrage in 1916 (cf. Watson 2003: 238).

interested in leading a comfortable life. Though Alexander has been harshly criticised for the idyllic landscapes in her hymns of adoration examined, they have a didactic purpose and in this particular hymn nature appears in its traditional biblical sense revealing her total commitment and awareness that:

Jesus calls us: o'er the tumult
Of our life's wild restless sea
Day by day his sweet voice soundeth,
Saying, 'Christian, follow me'.

As of old Saint Andrew heard it
By the Galilean lake,
Turned from home and toil and kindred,
Leaving all for his dear sake
(in Bradley 1989: 211).

Willis, in her adaptation of Psalm 23 (cf. Bradley 1989: 112), likewise prays for strength and courage to live her life according to God's will:

Not for ever in green pastures
Do we ask our way to be,
But the steep and rugged pathway
May we tread rejoicingly.

Not for ever by still water
Would we idly rest and stay,
But would smite the living fountains
From the rocks along our way
(in Bradley 1989: 113).

Both use nature, therefore, in its original biblical metaphorical sense and both epitomise the overall moral and religious pledge encountered in women's hymns in Britain and America alike.

## Appendix

1

And art thou come with us to dwell,
  Our prince, our guide, our love, our Lord,
And is thy name Immanuel,
  God present with his world restored?

The heart is glad for thee: it knows
  None now shall bid it err or mourn,
And o'er its desert breaks the rose
  In triumph o'er the grieving thorn.

Thou bringest all again; with thee
  Is light, is space, is breadth, and room
For each thing fair, beloved, and free,
  To have its hour of life and bloom.

Each heart's deep instinct unconfessed;
  Each lowly wish, each daring claim;
All, all that life hath long repressed
  Unfolds, undreading blight or blame.

Thy reign eternal will not cease;
  Thy years are sure, and glad, and slow;
Within thy mighty world of peace
  The humblest flower hath leave to blow.

The world is glad for thee!  The heart
  Is glad for thee!  And all is well,
And fixed, and sure, because thou art,
  Whose name is called Immanuel
(Greenwell in Watson 2003: 330)[12].

2

*All things bright and beautiful,*
  *All creatures great and small,*
*All things wise and wonderful,*
  *The Lord God made them all*.

Each little flower that opens,
  Each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colours,
  He made their tiny wings.
*All things* ...

[The rich man in his castle,
  The poor man at his gate,
God made them high or lowly,
  And ordered their estate].
*All things* ...

The purple headed mountain,
  The river running by,

[12] The full version is available at http://oldpoetry.com

The sunset and the morning,
  That brightens up the sky;
*All things* ...

The cold wind in the winter,
  The pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruits in the garden,
  He made them every one;
*All things* ...

[The tall trees in the greenwood,
  The meadows where we play,
The rushes by the water
  We gather every day;]
*All things* ...

He gave us eyes to see them,
  And lips that we might tell
How great is God Almighty,
  Who has made all things well.
*All things* ...
(Alexander in Watson 2003: 285)[13].

3
Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where his grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword:
    His truth is marching on.

I have seen him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps;
They have builded him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I have read his righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps:
    His day is marching on.

I have read a fiery gospel, writ in burnished rows of steel:
'As ye deal with my contemners, so with you my grace shall deal;
Let the hero born of woman crush the serpent with his heel,
    Since God is marching on.'

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreats;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before his judgement-seat;
O, be swift, my soul, to answer him; be jubilant, my feet!
    Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in him bosom that transfigures you and me;
As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
    While God is marching on.

He is coming like the glory of the morning on the wave;
He is wisdom to the mighty, he is succour to the brave;
So the world shall be his footstool, and the soul of time his slave;
    Our God is marching on
(Howe in Watson 2003: 365)[14].

[13] The short version is available at http://www.hymnsite.com
[14] Available also at http://www.hymnsite.com with the refrain "Glory, glory, hallelujah! His truth is marching on.

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