

Douglas, J. D., Comfort, P. W., & Mitchell, D. (1997, c1992). *Who's Who in Christian History*.

CROSBY, FRANCES (FANNY) JANE (1820–1915)

American hymn writer

Born in Putnam county, New York, Fanny Crosby was blinded through a physician's negligence at the age of six weeks. She entered the New York City Institution for the Blind around 1835, completed training, and taught there from 1847 to 1858. In 1858 she married a musician, Alexander Van Alstyne, who was also blind. Under her own name, as well as under a curious assortment of initials and pen names, she wrote over two thousand hymns, including "Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross," "Rescue the Perishing," "All the Way My Savior Leads Me," "I Am Thine, O Lord," "Sweet Hour of Prayer," and "To God Be the Glory."

There is hardly a hymnbook in the English language that does not contain at least one hymn by Fanny Crosby. Her poetic style is simple and earnest. The theological content, while unequivocally orthodox, is personal and experiential. Fanny Crosby was able to express both theological content and personal experience in her rhyming meters, speaking of the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that has been meaningful to millions of people.

Tan, P. L. (1996, c1979). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*.

652 *I Wish I were Blind*

The hymnwriter Fanny Crosby gave us more than 8000 Gospel songs. Although blinded at the age of 6 weeks, she never held any bitterness in her heart because of it. Once a preacher sympathetically remarked, "I think it is a great pity that the Master did not give you sight when He showered so many other gifts upon you."

She replied quickly, "Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition, it would have been that I should be born blind?" "Why?" asked the surprised clergyman. "Because when I get to Heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior!"

1032 *Fanny Crosby's "Soul's Poem"*

One of Fanny Crosby's hymns, based on a combination of the thoughts in [Ecclesiastes 12:6](#) and [Revelation 22:4, 5](#) was so personal that for years she never let others see it. Professor Kenneth Osbeck says its revelation to the public came about this way.

"One day at a Bible conference in Northfield, Massachusetts, Miss Crosby was asked by Dwight L. Moody to give a personal testimony concerning her faith and Christian experience. At first she hesitated, then quietly rose and said, "There is one hymn I have written which has never been published. I call it my soul's poem. Sometimes when I am troubled, I repeat it to myself, for it brings comfort to my heart." She then recited while many wept, "Someday the silver cord will break, and I no more as now shall sing; but O the joy when I shall wake within the palace of the King! And I shall see Him face to face, and tell the story—saved by grace!" At the age of 25, Fanny Crosby's wish that the face of Jesus would be the first she would ever see was realized."

4537 *Fanny Crosby's Prayer Life*

Fanny Crosby, though blinded in infancy, greeted friends and strangers alike with a cheerful

“God bless your dear soul.” And, according to her own statement, she never attempted to write a hymn without first kneeling in prayer. If this be true, Fanny Crosby spent considerable time on her knees. She wrote no less than 8,000 songs.

Miss Crosby was often under pressure to meet deadlines. It was under such circumstances in 1869 that she tried to write words for a tune Composer W. H. Doane had sent her. But she couldn't write. Then she remembered she had forgotten her prayer. Rising from her knees, she dictated—as fast as her assistant could write—words for the famous hymn, “Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross.”

But one day in 1874, Fanny Crosby prayed for more material things. She had run short of money and needed five dollars—even change. There was no time to draw on her publishers, so she simply prayed for the money. Her prayer ended, she was walking to and fro in her room trying to “get into the mood” for another hymn when an admirer called. Greeting the stranger with “God bless your dear soul,” the two chatted briefly.

In the parting handshake the admirer left something in the hymn-writer's hand. It was five dollars. Rising from a prayer of thanks the blind poetess wrote: “All the way my Saviour leads me.”

See: Fanny Crosby. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*.

[Fanny Crosby](#)