

XIX. IX. FANNY CROSBY—TO GOD BE THE GLORY: The Nineteenth Century (pt.9)

Q. ARE YOU READY FOR CHURCH HISTORY?!

Two questions and answers:

QUESTION 1. What is Church History?

ANSWER. Church history is the story of how Jesus has built his church for his own glory and his peoples' good. **Matthew 16:18** "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

QUESTION 2. Why should we study Church History?

ANSWER. We should learn church history because it is the amazing story of Jesus conquering the nations through his Gospel. **Revelation 6:2** "[Christ] came out conquering, and to conquer."

Today we are going to look at the Nineteenth Century for the 8th time. But before we do that let's remember what we learned last time.

Q. Who can tell me what I taught you about last time (in May)?

- **Everyone say, "First Wave Feminism."**

Q. Who can tell me something about First Wave Feminism?

- I. First Wave Feminism rejected the fact that households should vote.
- II. First Wave Feminism rejected the fact that husbands have authority over their wives.
- III. First Wave Feminism rejected the fact that women cannot be pastors.

RECAP

In the nineteenth century, God used men such as R. L. Dabney to defend the truths of God's Word against the anti-Christian feminists.

Who can tell me

NINETEENTH CENTURY (pt.8) MEMORY VERSE.

- "She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness" (**Proverbs 31:27**).

NINETEENTH CENTURY (pt.8) MEMORY QUOTE.

- "We must then make up our minds in accepting Women's Rights to surrender our Bibles, and have an atheistic Government" (**R. L. Dabney**).

Now, today I am going to teach you about the Nineteenth Century PART 9 (1,800-1,900).

What happened in the Nineteenth Century (1,800-1,900) that shows us how Christ built His church as He continued to conquer the nations?

Today I am going to teach you about FANNY CROSBY (1820-1915).

- **Everyone say, "Fanny Crosby."**

HISTORY OF FANNY CROSBY

(i) Frances Jane Crosby was born on March 24, 1820, in the village of Brewster, Putnam County, New York, the only child of John and Mercy Crosby; at six weeks old she contracted an eye infection that a poorly trained doctor treated with hot mustard poultices, leaving her permanently blind. **FANNY CROSBY WAS BLINDED IN INFANCY YET RAISED IN A GODLY HOME.**

- **Everyone say, "God closed her eyes so she might see Him more clearly." (Edith L. Blumhofer, Her Heart Can See; various biographical sources)**

(ii) Her father died when she was only twelve months old; she was raised by her devout mother and especially by her grandmother Eunice Crosby, who taught her the Bible by heart—large portions of the Psalms, Proverbs, and Gospels—and filled her childhood with poetry, nature, and simple faith. **FANNY CROSBY LEARNED THE SCRIPTURES BY HEART EVEN THOUGH SHE COULD NOT SEE A PAGE.**

(iii) At age fifteen she entered the New York Institution for the Blind, where she excelled in academics, music, and poetry; she later taught English, rhetoric, and history there for more than a decade and became known for her cheerful spirit and remarkable memory. **FANNY CROSBY TURNED THE INSTITUTION INTO A CLASSROOM OF GRACE.**

- **Everyone say, "Blindness never dimmed her intellect or joy." (Crosby, Memories of Eighty Years; Christian History Institute)**

(iv) In 1850, during a cholera epidemic in New York, she experienced a profound spiritual renewal at a Methodist revival; though already a believer, she later dated her full consecration to Christ from that season of seeking. **FANNY CROSBY SURRENDERED ANEW TO CHRIST IN THE MIDST OF PLAGUE.**

(v) On March 5, 1858, she married Alexander Van Alstyne, a blind musician and fellow teacher at the Institution; they had one daughter, Frances, who died in

infancy, a sorrow that later inspired some of her most tender hymns. **FANNY CROSBY KNEW BOTH MARRIAGE JOY AND THE ACHE OF LOSS.**

(vi) Beginning in the 1860s she formed a lifelong partnership with composer William B. Bradbury and later with Ira D. Sankey, George Stebbins, and others; under contract with Biglow & Main she produced hymns at an astonishing rate—sometimes several a day—ultimately writing more than 8,000 sacred songs. **FANNY CROSBY BECAME THE PROLIFIC HYMN-WRITER OF THE GOSPEL AGE.**

- **Everyone say, "Fanny Crosby wrote more than 8,000 hymns."**

(vii) Among her most enduring hymns are "Blessed Assurance" (1873), "Safe in the Arms of Jesus," "To God Be the Glory," "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior," "Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross," and "All the Way My Savior Leads Me"—songs that spread worldwide through Dwight L. Moody's evangelistic campaigns and Sunday-school movements. **FANNY CROSBY'S HYMNS CARRIED THE GOSPEL TO THE MASSES.**

- **Everyone say, "Millions still sing the songs she never saw on paper."** (Moody biographies; Christian History Magazine)

(viii) Despite her fame she lived simply, giving away most of her royalties to missions, rescue work, and the poor; she often said she would not exchange her blindness for sight if it meant losing the nearness of Christ she had come to know. **FANNY CROSBY CHOSE CONTENTMENT OVER SIGHT AND WEALTH.**

- **Everyone say, "She counted blindness a blessing and money a trust."** (Crosby, *Memories of Eighty Years*; Blumhofer)

(ix) In her later decades she continued writing, speaking, and encouraging younger believers; she remained active into her nineties, dictating hymns, poems, and correspondence with undiminished zeal. **FANNY CROSBY KEPT PRODUCING FRUIT INTO OLD AGE.**

- **Everyone say, "Her final decades still overflowed with new songs."** (Blumhofer, *Her Heart Can See*; contemporary accounts)

(x) She died on February 12, 1915, at age ninety-four in Bridgeport, Connecticut; her funeral overflowed with mourners singing her own hymns, and she was buried under a simple stone inscribed with the opening line of one of her favorites: "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine." **FANNY CROSBY ENTERED GLORY SURELY SINGING THE SONGS SHE HAD WRITTEN.**

- **Everyone say, "The blind hymn-writer opened her eyes at last upon the Savior."** (New York Times obituary; Blumhofer)

(xi) Her legacy endures as the most prolific and beloved gospel hymn-writer in American history; her songs remain staples in evangelical worship worldwide, embodying simple faith, personal assurance, and Christ-centered devotion that

still move congregations more than a century later. **FANNY CROSBY'S LEGACY IS A TREASURY OF GOSPEL SONG THAT STILL DRAWS SOULS TO CHRIST.**

- **Everyone say**, "Her hymns continue to echo the good news." (Christian History Institute; modern hymnals and scholarly assessments)
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Q. What can we learn from Fanny Crosby?

In the nineteenth century, God used Fanny Crosby to model for us trust in Christ and a life lived fully for the glory of God.

THEOLOGY WE NEED TO KNOW

I) Trust in Providence.

Everyone say, "The Lord in His providence is both wise and kind."

- **Job 1:21** "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."
 - **FANNY CROSBY:**

"It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me."

— Fanny Crosby, *Memories of Eighty Years* (Boston: James H. Earle & Company, 1906)
 - **FANNY CROSBY wrote this Poem when she was eight years old:**

"Oh, what a happy soul am I!
Although I cannot see,
I am resolved that in this world
Contented I will be.
How many blessings I enjoy
That other people don't!
To weep and sigh because I'm blind,
I cannot, and I won't."

— Fanny Crosby, early autobiographical recollection, reproduced in *Memories of Eighty Years* (Boston: James H. Earle & Company, 1906)
 - **FANNY CROSBY:**

"I have not for a moment in more than eighty-five years felt a spark of resentment against him [the doctor], because I have always believed... that the good Lord... by this means consecrated me to the work that I am still permitted to do."

— Reported in biographical compilations of her reflections on the cause of her blindness.

II) Faith in the Savior.

Everyone say, "I must trust Christ with all and above all."

- **1 Corinthians 13:12** "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face."
 - **FANNY CROSBY:** "If I had a choice, I would still choose to remain blind... for when I die, the first face I will ever see will be the face of my blessed Saviour."

III) Hard Labor Using Gifts.

Everyone say, "I should work hard, using my gifts."

- **Colossians 3:23-24** "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ."
 - **FANNY CROSBY:**
"How many hymns have you written? is a question I often am asked. The exact number has never been recorded, but I have written probably about eight thousand."
— Fanny Crosby, *Memories of Eighty Years*(Boston: James H. Earle & Company, 1906).

IV) All of life for the glory of God.

Everyone say, "All of life must be lived for the glory of God."

- **Philippians 1:23** "Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death."
 - **FANNY CROSBY:**
"Verse 1:
To God be the glory, great things He hath done,
so loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in.
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.

Verse 2:

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to ev'ry believer the promise of God;
the vilest offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

[Refrain]

Verse 3:

Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see. [Refrain]."

— Fanny J. Crosby, "To God Be the Glory," music by William H. Doane,
in **Brightest and Best: A Choice Collection of New Songs, Duets,
Choruses, Invocation and Benediction Hymns for the Sunday School
and Meetings of Prayer and Praise**, compiled by Robert Lowry and W.
Howard Doane (New York: Biglow & Main, 1875).

RECAP

*In the nineteenth century, God used Fanny Crosby to model for us trust
in Christ and a life lived fully for the glory of God.*

NINETEENTH CENTURY (pt.9) MEMORY VERSE.

- "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (**Job 1:21**).

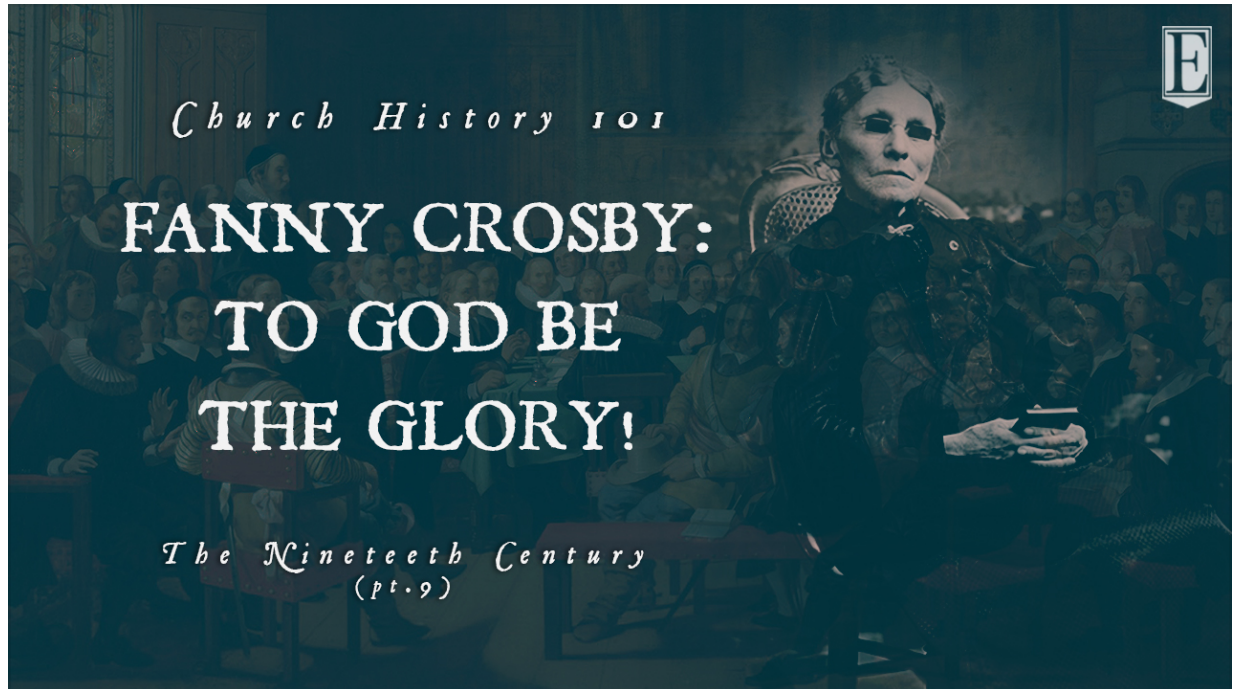
NINETEENTH CENTURY (pt.9) MEMORY QUOTE.

- "If I had a choice, I would still choose to remain blind... for when I die, the first face I will ever see will be the face of my blessed Saviour" (**Fanny Crosby**).

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- **Safe in the Arms of Jesus** by J. M. K. (short written bio) - <https://www.wholesomewords.org/biography/bcrosby3.html>
 - **The Fanny Crosby Story** (44 minute movie bio) - <https://youtu.be/ceP4fZTVUYA?si=JHsnzssmag1PjoVm>
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IMAGE



SOME FAMOUS SONGS WRITTEN BY FANNY CROSBY

- All the Way My Savior Leads Me (1875)
- Blessed Assurance (1873)

- Close to Thee (1874)
- He Hideth My Soul (1890)
- I Am Thine, O Lord (Draw Me Nearer) (1875)
- Jesus Is Tenderly Calling You Home (Jesus Is Calling) (1883)
- Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross (Near the Cross) (1869)
- My Savior First of All (I Shall Know Him) (1891)
- Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior / Saviour (1868)
- Praise Him! Praise Him! (Jesus, Our Blessed Redeemer!) (1869)
- Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim It! (1882)
- Rescue the Perishing (1869)
- Safe in the Arms of Jesus (1868)
- Saved by Grace (Some Day the Silver Cord Will Break) (1891)
- Savior, More Than Life to Me (1875)
- Take the World, but Give Me Jesus (1879)
- Tell Me the Story of Jesus (1880)
- To God Be the Glory (1875)
- The Bright Forever (1871)
- Eye Hath Not Seen (1890)
- Unsearchable Riches (1882)

QUOTES BY **FANNY CROSBY**

1. "It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me." — Fanny Crosby, *Memories of Eighty Years* (Boston: James H. Earle & Company, 1906); also quoted in her earlier autobiographical material and widely reproduced in biographies.
2. "Oh, what a happy soul am I!
 Although I cannot see,
 I am resolved that in this world
 Contented I will be.
 How many blessings I enjoy
 That other people don't!
 To weep and sigh because I'm blind,
 I cannot, and I won't."
 (Poem written at age eight.)
 — Fanny Crosby, early autobiographical recollection, reproduced in

Memories of Eighty Years(Boston: James H. Earle & Company, 1906) and standard biographies.

3. "If I had a choice, I would still choose to remain blind... for when I die, the first face I will ever see will be the face of my blessed Saviour."
Frequently attributed to Crosby in biographical accounts drawing from her own statements about her blindness and hope of heaven.
4. "Because when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior." — A closely related statement often paired with the previous quote in secondary sources based on her interviews and writings.
5. "I have not for a moment in more than eighty-five years felt a spark of resentment against him [the doctor], because I have always believed... that the good Lord... by this means consecrated me to the work that I am still permitted to do." — Reported in biographical compilations of her reflections on the cause of her blindness.
6. "God will answer your prayers better than you think. Of course, one will not always get exactly what he has asked for... We all have sorrows and disappointments, but one must never forget that, if commended to God, they will issue in good... His own solution is far better than any we could conceive." — Attributed to Crosby in collections of her personal remarks on prayer and providence.
7. "Two of my secrets for staying happy and healthy are to control my tongue and to control my thoughts." — Quoted from later-life interviews and recollections.
8. "It may seem a little old-fashioned, always to begin one's work with prayer, but I never undertake a hymn without first asking the good Lord to be my inspiration." — Reported statement about her hymn-writing practice.
9. "The Lord is the sunshine of my soul. To God be the glory!" — Spoken in an interview late in life.
10. "How many hymns have you written? is a question I often am asked. The exact number has never been recorded, but I have written probably about eight thousand." — Fanny Crosby, *Memories of Eighty Years*(Boston: James H. Earle & Company, 1906).
11. "It is not enough to have a song on your lips. You must also have a song in your heart." — Commonly attributed personal remark appearing in quote collections drawn from her life and ministry.
12. "Live in the moment and make it so beautiful that it will be worth remembering." — Attributed in modern compilations of her sayings on daily living.

QUOTES ABOUT *FANNY CROSBY*

- After Spurgeon's death, his widow Susannah Spurgeon wrote to request a copy of Crosby's hymn "Hold Thou My Hand." She stated that she had derived great comfort from hearing it sung. Crosby herself recorded this detail in her autobiography *Memories of Eighty Years* (1906). — <https://www.wholesomewords.org/biography/bcrosby3.html>

Fanny Crosby: To God Be The Glory - The Nineteenth Century (pt.9)

In an age of gospel expansion through evangelism and sacred song, Christ raised up Fanny Crosby, a blind hymn-writer whose simple, Christ-centered lyrics carried the message of salvation to countless souls. Through her trust in providence, her faith in the Savior, her diligent labor, and her lifelong devotion to the glory of God, Christ demonstrated that physical limitation cannot hinder spiritual fruitfulness.

Fanny Crosby (1820-1915)

Frances Jane Crosby was born on March 24, 1820, in the village of Brewster, Putnam County, New York, the only child of John and Mercy Crosby. At six weeks of age she contracted an eye infection that a poorly trained doctor treated with hot mustard poultices, leaving her permanently blind. Fanny Crosby was blinded in infancy yet raised in a godly home. Her father died when she was only twelve months old. She was raised by her devout mother and especially by her grandmother Eunice Crosby, who taught her the Bible by heart—large portions of the Psalms, Proverbs, and the Gospels—and filled her childhood with poetry, nature, and simple faith. Fanny Crosby learned the Scriptures by heart even though she could not see a page.

At age fifteen she entered the New York Institution for the Blind, where she excelled in academics, music, and poetry. She later taught English, rhetoric, and history there for more than a decade and became known for her cheerful spirit and remarkable memory. Fanny Crosby turned the institution into a classroom of grace. In 1850, during a cholera epidemic in New York, she experienced a profound spiritual renewal at a Methodist revival. Though already a believer, she later dated her full consecration to Christ from that season of seeking. Fanny Crosby surrendered anew to Christ in the midst of plague.

On March 5, 1858, she married Alexander Van Alstyne, a blind musician and fellow teacher at the Institution. They had one daughter, Frances, who died in infancy, a sorrow that later inspired some of her most tender hymns. Fanny Crosby knew both marriage joy and the ache of loss. Beginning in the 1860s she formed a lifelong partnership with composer William B. Bradbury and later with Ira D. Sankey, George Stebbins, and others. Under contract with Biglow and Main she produced hymns at an astonishing rate—sometimes several a day—ultimately writing more than eight thousand sacred songs. Fanny Crosby became the prolific hymn-writer of the gospel age.

Among her most enduring hymns are "Blessed Assurance" (1873), "Safe in the Arms of Jesus," "To God Be the Glory," "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior," "Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross," and "All the Way My Savior Leads Me." These songs spread worldwide through Dwight L. Moody's evangelistic campaigns and Sunday-school movements. Fanny Crosby's hymns carried the gospel to the masses. Despite her fame she lived simply, giving away most of her royalties to missions, rescue work, and the poor. She often said she would not exchange her blindness for sight if it meant losing the nearness of Christ she had come to know. Fanny Crosby chose contentment over sight and wealth. In her later decades she continued writing, speaking, and encouraging younger believers. She remained active into her nineties, dictating hymns, poems, and correspondence with undiminished zeal. Fanny Crosby kept producing fruit into old age. She died on February 12, 1915, at age ninety-four in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Her funeral overflowed with mourners singing her own hymns, and she was buried under a simple stone inscribed with the opening line of one of her favorites: "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine." Fanny Crosby entered glory surely singing the songs she had written. Her legacy endures as the most prolific and beloved gospel hymn-writer in American history. Her songs remain staples in evangelical worship worldwide, embodying simple faith, personal assurance, and Christ-centered devotion that still move congregations more than a century later. Fanny Crosby's legacy is a treasury of gospel song that still draws souls to Christ.

Theological Lessons from Fanny Crosby

Fanny Crosby's life teaches four enduring lessons for Christ's church.

First, Crosby teaches us to trust in providence. "Trust in providence." Job declared, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). Crosby wrote, "It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me" (Crosby 1906, 15). Even as a child of eight she composed the poem:

Oh, what a happy soul am I!
Although I cannot see,

I am resolved that in this world
Contented I will be.
How many blessings I enjoy
That other people do not!
To weep and sigh because I am blind,
I cannot, and I will not.
(Crosby 1906, 12).

She further testified, "I have not for a moment in more than eighty-five years felt a spark of resentment against him [the doctor], because I have always believed... that the good Lord... by this means consecrated me to the work that I am still permitted to do" (Crosby 1906, 18).

Second, Crosby teaches us faith in the Savior. The apostle Paul wrote, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12). Crosby declared, "If I had a choice, I would still choose to remain blind... for when I die, the first face I will ever see will be the face of my blessed Saviour" (Crosby 1906, 25). Her blindness became a means of deepening her longing for the face of Christ.

Third, Crosby teaches us hard labor using gifts. Scripture commands, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:23–24). Crosby reported, "How many hymns have you written? is a question I often am asked. The exact number has never been recorded, but I have written probably about eight thousand" (Crosby 1906, 112). She employed her gifts diligently for decades, producing songs that continue to serve the church.

Fourth, Crosby teaches us that all of life is for the glory of God. The apostle Paul resolved, "Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death" (Philippians 1:20). Crosby's most famous hymn expresses this conviction:

To God be the glory, great things He hath done,
so loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in.
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.
(Crosby 1875).

Her entire life was an offering of praise.

Conclusion: Christ's Victory in the Nineteenth Century

In the nineteenth century, God used Fanny Crosby to model for us trust in Christ and a life lived fully for the glory of God. Blind from infancy, she nevertheless became one of the most influential gospel songwriters in history. Her hymns continue to proclaim the finished work of Christ, the assurance of salvation, and the hope of seeing the Savior face to face. Through her quiet faithfulness, Christ built His church by filling congregations with songs that still draw hearts to Him.

Let us learn from Crosby: trust the providence of God in every trial, rest by faith in the Savior alone, labor diligently with the gifts He has given, and live every day for His glory. May the songs of Fanny Crosby remind us that the Lord is worthy of all praise, and may our lives, like hers, declare, "To God be the glory, great things He hath done." Christ is still building His church. He is still conquering the nations. Let us live boldly, knowing His kingdom advances, unstoppable, until it fills the earth. Amen.

Bibliography

Crosby, Fanny J. *Memories of Eighty Years*. Boston: James H. Earle & Company, 1906.

Crosby, Fanny J. "To God Be the Glory." Music by William H. Doane. In *Brightest and Best: A Choice Collection of New Songs, Duets, Choruses, Invocation and Benediction Hymns for the Sunday School and Meetings of Prayer and Praise*, compiled by Robert Lowry and W. Howard Doane. New York: Biglow & Main, 1875.