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Hymns We Love: Blessed Assurance

While Isaac Watts authored over 600 hymns during his lifetime, that accomplishment pales in comparison with that of Connecticut's own Fanny Crosby (1820–1915), who wrote the lyrics to more than 8,000 hymns and gospel songs, with over 100 million copies printed! Even more remarkable, these were the accomplishments of a woman who had become blind just a few weeks after birth. Crosby was a household name in America by the end of the 19th century, and known as the “Queen of Gospel Song Writers.” Because some publishers were reluctant to have so many hymns by a single author in their hymnals, Crosby used almost 200 different pseudonyms during her career. In later years, she resided in Bridgeport, CT, and is buried there.

My favorite Crosby hymn is Blessed Assurance, which is an example of a hymn where the composition of the tune preceded the writing of the lyrics. While Fanny was visiting her friend Phoebe Knapp in New York, Knapp played for her a melody on the piano that she had just written. When Phoebe asked Fanny, “What do you think the tune says?”, Fanny is said to have spontaneously responded, “Blessed assurance; Jesus is mine.” It was published in 1873 and was an instant hit. Its rollicking melody in 9/8 time and lyrics that extol an exuberant, personal faith have made it the quintessential American gospel hymn. The lyrics could be said to be autobiographical of Fanny's own faith journey:

This is my story, this is my song,

Praising my Savior, all the day long.

Take care, and keep singing!

Listen to Blessed Assurance:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQ9Z4kbB9Vs&t=76s>

