

Be Thou Exalted

by

Bill Dagle

Some might say it was a chance meeting; but now, 30 years later, I know it was providential for me. I was in Bible school, and Dr. Al Smith came to share the stories behind the hymns. That meeting started a new life's journey that has yet to be completed. A friendship developed over the years, and now his passion for sharing the story abides in me. With this in mind, may I tell how the greatest hymn writer of all times, the blind poetess, Fanny Crosby, and my mentor, Dr. Al Smith, wrote a hymn together. What makes the story most interesting is that Fanny was home in Heaven before Al Smith had even arrived here on earth.

Fanny Crosby, in her lifetime, would write over 8,000 hymns even though she had been blind since her childhood. It was in her early thirties, she received Christ as her personal savior; and from that moment forward, she devoted every waking minute to serving her Lord. In time, she developed the ability to formulate up to 15 poems in her mind and the following morning would dictate them to a stenographer. Great names like Doane, Sweney, Kirdpatrick, Gabriel, and Sankey would add the music, and the words would take flight. For 95 years, Fanny enjoyed this part of the Father's creation and went home to be with Him in 1915.

Many years later, Dr. Al discovered a poem by Fanny that had been sent to the publisher, Edmund Lorenz, but never set to music or put in print. The poem had a few mistakes, probably caused by the tired hand of a stenographer. Dr. Al relates what happened next: "As I looked at the poem, I began to view it as I felt Fanny would have, had she had her sight to see where it needed correcting. Immediately, the new words and phrases began to fall into place. I then wrote a chorus and as quickly as I could write, the melody began to form. In a matter of minutes, it was completed."

Dr. Al felt that God had permitted this poem to lie dormant for some 70 to 75 years so that he might have the privilege of giving wings to a marvelous hymn poem that Fanny Crosby had written. As Dr. Al said, "A message of praise which is one of the best she ever wrote both for style and scriptural content."

Be Thou exalted, forever and ever, God of eternity, The Ancient of Days! Wondrous in Majesty, so mighty in wisdom, perfect in holiness, and worthy of praise.

Be Thou exalted, O Son of the Highest Gracious Redeemer Our Saviour and King! One With the Father, co-equal in glory, Here at Thy footstool our homage we bring.

Chorus

Be thou exalted by seraphs and angels, Be thou exalted with harp and with song; Saints In their anthems of rapture adore thee, Thine be the glory forever Amen