

The Legacy of William Howard Doane (1823–1915)

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William Howard Doane was born to Joseph and Francis (Treat) Doane in Preston, Connecticut, on February 3, 1832.¹ He was the fifth of eight children born into this staunchly Presbyterian home. His earliest paternal ancestor, John Doane, came to this country on the Mayflower, arriving in 1630 and settling in Plymouth, Massachusetts. [Digital image on screen]

The *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* describes William Howard Doane as a “manufacturer and composer.”² Doane showed remarkable musical ability from an early age, becoming a music director at the age of 14 while attending Woodstock Academy in Connecticut, and at the age of 16 producing his first musical composition—a cantata entitled “Santa Claus.” When he was 20 years old he became conductor of the Norwich Harmonic Society.

While he was a student at Woodstock Academy³ he professed personal faith in Christ. Even though his father was a life-long Presbyterian, Doane became a Baptist. One of his biographers, Charles Rhoads, provides tongue-in-cheek speculation on why this might have happened: “Perhaps his mother’s lessons, [together] with the kindly warning of the well-known Elder Jabez Swan, who put his hand on his head and said, ‘William, don’t let those Congregationalists or Presbyterians get you,’ had something to do with it.”

Whatever the reason, Doane was baptized by immersion and remained a committed Baptist throughout his life. He was an active member

of the Mount Auburn Baptist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, serving for many years as Sunday School superintendent and choir director.⁴

Graduating from Woodstock Academy in Connecticut, he began his career in 1848 in the Counting room of his father’s cotton manufacturing firm (Doane & Treat) in Voluntown, Connecticut.

Three years later, in 1851, he moved to Norwich, Connecticut to take charge of the books and financial department of J. A. Fay & Company, manufacturers of woodworking machinery, with branches in Massachusetts and Ohio. Because of his natural abilities, immense energy, and pleasing personality, he was rapidly promoted.

In 1858 he was transferred to Chicago to superintend the company’s operations in the west. That year he was cited in *The Scientific American* as claimant of a patent for an “improved sawing machine,” the first of what would be numerous patents filed over the next decade.⁵

In 1860—at the age of 28—he moved to Cincinnati to become vice-president and a full partner of the company. Within six years—at the age of 34—he was made president and general manager of J. A. Fay Company, a position he held for 26 years, until his retirement in 1892.

He was also president of the Central Safe and Deposit Company, and a director of many other business enterprises. A prolific inventor of wood shaping devices and machines, Doane patented more than seventy inventions. His genius was internationally acknowledged in

¹ Edith L. Blumhofer, *Her Heart Can See: The Life and Hymns of Fanny J. Crosby* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), p. 213.

² From the typescript of this article found in the OMSC Archives, Volume I, Section 3, Part A. Item 7.

³ Woodstock Academy, “Serving youth since 1801”—is still a thriving institution, although it is no longer explicitly religious. <http://www.woodstockacademy.org>

⁴ Mount Auburn Baptist Church is still functioning,

⁵ Blumhofer, p. 214.

1889 when he was awarded the grand prize in his category at the Paris Exposition, and was made a chevalier of the Legion of Honor by the government of France.

But his greatest fame and most enduring legacy was his music. He received training from the most distinguished music teachers of the day. He played the flute, the double bass fiddle, the violin, the pipe organ, the piano, and a reed instrument known as the seraphine⁶ (invented in 1833). He was also in great demand as a choral conductor.

He wrote both secular and sacred music, publishing several cantatas, composing music for approximately 2,300 hymns, ballads, vocals, and piano pieces, and editing 43 hymnbooks.⁷ His first piece of music – “The

⁶ A wind instrument whose sounding parts are reeds, consisting of a thin tongue of brass playing freely through a slot in a plate. It has a case, like a piano, and is played by means of a similar keyboard, the bellows being worked by the foot. The melodeon is a portable variety of this instrument.

⁷ His works include:

Sabbath School Gems, 1862.

Little Sunbeams, 1864.

The Silver Spray (Cincinnati, Ohio: John Church & Co., 1868).

Songs of Devotion (New York, 1870).

Pure Gold for the Sunday School (New York: 1871).

Royal Diadem for the Sunday School, with Robert Lowry (New York: Biglow & Main: 1873).

Brightest and Best, with Robert Lowry (New York: Biglow & Main, 1875).

Welcome Tidings: A New Collection of Sacred Songs for the Sunday School (with Robert Lowry & Ira Sankey) (New York: Biglow & Main, 1877).

Gospel Hymn and Tune Book, with Robert Lowry (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1879).

Hymn Service for the Sunday School, with Robert Lowry, D. A. Whedon & John H. Vincent (New York: Biglow & Main, 1879).

Good as Gold, with Robert Lowry (New York: Biglow & Main, 1880).

The Baptist Hymnal (musical editor) (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: American Baptist Publication Society, 1883).

Joyful Lays (with Robert Lowry) (New York: Biglow & Main, 1884).

The Glad Refrain (with Robert Lowry) (New York: Biglow & Main, 1886).

Grave Beneath the Willow” – was published in 1848.

But it was not until his recovery from a very serious heart condition in 1862 that he decided to devote his musical talent to writing sacred music. For many years he had refused to stoop to the lowly level of gospel music, feeling that it would diminish his reputation as a classical musician. But the Lord intervened. This is how he describes his decision to write sacred music:

...I was troubled with fainting spells and was very weak. After some weeks without feeling any better, my physician recommended my return to Chicago and try what a change of air would do.... When about half way between Albany and Lockport I had a very severe attack of heart trouble and fainting spells. My wife who occupied the adjoining berth had been summoned and she was quickly on hand with remedies to give relief. As she opened my curtains there seemed to be a flash of a thousand electric lights and all I could see was these words: “You refused.” My wife

Select Gems (with Robert Lowry) (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: American Baptist Publication Society, 1889).

Sunny-Side Songs for Sunday Schools (New York: The Biglow & Main Co., 1893).

Songs of the Kingdom (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: American Baptist Publication Society, 1896).

Notes of Gladness for Young People's Meetings, Special Occasions, and the Home Circle (Cincinnati, 1898).

Glorious Praise, with William Kirkpatrick (Louisville, Kentucky: The Baptist Book Concern, 1904).

Precious Jewels of Sacred Song (Louisville, Kentucky: The World Publishing Co., undated).

Jubilant Voices for Sunday Schools and Devotional Meetings, with W. J. Kirkpatrick, E. A. Hoffman, and C. H. Gabriel (Chicago, IL: Hope Publishing Company, 1905).

Song Evangel (Louisville, Kentucky: 1906).

See also Al Smith, *To God Be the Glory: Inspiring Story of William H. Doane, one of America's Pioneer Gospel Song Composers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Singspiration, 1955). This volume includes a collection of fifty of Doane's songs.

said she could not see it, but for me to take my medicine quick. I asked her again and she replied, “You know papa I always told you I was afraid the Lord would bring some judgment upon you for refusing to write the music for that good Chicago man.” I thought my time had come. Then it flashed upon me that I had done wrong in refusing and I promised the Lord I would do anything He wanted. I was taken off the train in the night and sent to a hotel. Within 24 hours I began to improve. My fainting spells left me, strength came and within a week I was able to continue the journey. This vow I have sacredly kept and every dollar received from this source has been given back to the Lord.⁸

Doane’s first songbook, *Sabbath School Gems*, appeared in 1862, followed by *Little Sunbeams* in 1864, and *Silver Spray* in 1867. *Silver Spray* alone sold 300,000 copies in two months. He refused to publish tunes that did not touch his own heart. This morning we celebrate his legacy by singing some of his music.

1. Take the Name of Jesus With You. The words for this hymn were written by Lydia Baxter, an invalid. This was Doane’s favorite hymn, and so it is appropriate that we should begin with it. It was also the favorite hymn at North Japan College in Sendai, often sung in morning worship. I first heard it as a five-year-old, in Amharic, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where it was sung every week in morning worship at Bingham Academy.

Verse:

Hazentenyan yemiyaTSanaw
 Ye medhanitachin sim
 Yan Kidus sim yemiTeraw
 Yiredal yidinalim.

⁸ OMSC Archives, Volume I, Section 3, Part A, Item 19. According to Blumhofer (p. 216), his daughters later estimated that the average annual income generated by sales of his music was between \$20,000 and 25,000.

Chorus:

Kidus sim, biTsu sim
 Yezelalem tesfa nou.
 Kidus sim, biTsu sim
 Yezelalem tesfa nou.⁹

2. Tell Me the Old, Old Story. This hymn was one result Doane’s visit to Canada in 1867 to attend an international YMCA convention. He was moved when an old soldier read the poem from a piece of notepaper, weeping as he read the words by Kate Hankey.

He wrote the music for it while traveling home from Canada on top of a stagecoach, crossing the White Mountains to the Crawford House, where the hymn was first sung that evening in the parlor.¹⁰

3. Rescue the Perishing. *The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn.* (Isaiah 61:1-2)

Then the master told his servant, “Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.” (Luke 14:23)

⁹ This was one of many songs translated into Amharic, mostly by Swedish missionaries. The song book was called *Sibhat L'Amlak*. The capital letters indicate sub-glottal explosive sounds. The lyrics, literally:

“The one who comforts the sorrowing, on our Savior's name. The one who calls on that holy name, He helps, He saves. Holy name, blessed name, the everlasting hope; holy name, blessed name, the everlasting hope.”

¹⁰ From “Biography of W. H. Doane” by Charles Rhoads, Read at the Laying of the Corner Stone of Doane Hall at Denison University, Granville, Ohio, March 9, 1878. OMSC Archives, Vol. I, Section 3, Part A, Item 2.

Fanny Crosby wrote this poem in 1869, coming out of one of her New York mission work experiences. As she was speaking to a group of day laborers one summer evening, she was nagged by the thought that there was someone present who had wandered from his mother's home and teaching, and that this young man should be invited to see her at the end of the service.

She gave the invitation, and a young man of eighteen came forward, asking, "Did you mean me? I promised to meet my mother in heaven, but the way I am living now that will be impossible." Following fervent and prolonged prayer, the youngman rose to his feet and joyfully exclaimed: "Now I can meet my mother in heaven, for I have found God!"

A few days before Fanny Crosby had written her poem, Doane had sent her a theme and the first line for a new song, "Rescue the Perishing," based on Luke 14:23. While she sat in the mission that evening, the line came to her, "Rescue the perishing, care for the dying." She couldn't think of anything else that night, and once she had gotten home, worked on the lyrics steadily so that before she went to bed, it was ready for the melody. This song was first published in 1870 in Doane's *Songs of Devotion*.

Fanny J. Crosby (1820–1915) became blind while she was still a baby when a doctor prescribed the wrong medicine for an inflammation. She attended the New York City School for the Blind and taught school for eleven years after graduation. Using 200 pen names besides her own, Married at age 35 to a blind musician, Fanny Crosby wrote the words for more than 8,000 hymns—the first when she was already 41 years old. She was an active member of John Street Methodist Episcopal Church (America's oldest Methodist), and at one time was under contract to write three hymns per week. Fanny lived to the age of 95 (1820-1915). She and Doane were lifelong collaborators.

Because of her prodigious memory and her capacity to compose and recite long poems, Crosby became a celebrity in her day, meeting U.S. presidents John Quincy Adams, Martin Van Buren, James Polk, James Buchanan, and Andrew Johnson. But throughout her life, she was intensely involved in helping the poor and the homeless in New York.¹¹

4. Savior More than Life to Me. Fanny Crosby wrote the poem in 1874, saying that it gave her great comfort and joy in her saddest moments – strengthening her faith, firing her hope, and feeding her love. Doane gave the poem its title, and wrote the music to a song that has been used to bless tens of thousands of believers around the world.

5. I am Thine O Lord. Fanny Crosby was inspired to write the lyrics of this hymn one night after a long discussion with William Howard Doane in his Cincinnati, Ohio home, about God's presence. Hebrews 10:22—*Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water*—was the scripture reference associated with the hymn when it was first published for the first time in *Brightest and Best*, a Sunday-school songbook that Doane edited with Robert Lowry in 1875. (Jose will now sing this for us in Portuguese.)

6. Jesus Keep me Near the Cross. Doane wrote the tune, and asked Crosby to write words to go with it. *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.* (Galatians 6:14) The hymns jointly created by Doane and Crosby enjoyed both immediate and prolonged success. Crosby was the author of the lyrics for eleven of the fifteen hymns touted by *The Christian Endeavor World* as "Famous Hymns

¹¹ I cannot recommend highly enough Edith Blumhofer's superb biography, *Her Heart Can See: the Life and Hymns of Fanny J. Crosby* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

for Which Dr. Doane Has Written Equally Famous Tunes.”

7. **More Love to Thee.** Elizabeth Payson Prentiss wrote this hymn hurriedly in 1856 during a particularly stressful time in her life. It wasn't published until 1870, when Doane wrote a melody for it and it was sung in the revival movement throughout the United States. *This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.* (Philippians 1:9-11) (Our Korean singing group will now sing this song in Korean.)

Paul
sang

8. **Pass Me Not O Gentle Savior.** During a visit to a Manhattan prison, one prisoner shouted, “Good Lord! Do not pass me by!” That evening, Crosby incorporated the first line as suggested by Doane, who then composed a tune for it, and included it in his hymnbook, *Songs of Devotion for Christian Associations* (1870). *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.* (2 Peter 3:9)

9. **Safe in the arms of Jesus.** Usually, words precede music in the writing of hymns. But in Doane's case, the order was frequently reversed. Here is how Fanny Crosby describes its genesis:

One day [in 1868], Dr. Doane came to me hurriedly and exclaimed: “Fanny, I have just forty minutes to catch the train for Cincinnati; during that time, you must write me a hymn and give me a few minutes to catch the train. Here is the tune....” and sitting down at the piano, he played the melody. “What does it say to you?” he asked. I listened intently. I prayed for inspiration, then, suddenly the idea came to me. “Why,” I exclaimed joyously, “it says only one

thing to me; it says ‘safe in the arms of Jesus’. “Splendid,” he remarked encouragingly. So I started to work. I happened to be in a good mood for writing, and in twenty minutes the hymn was ready. Mr. Doane caught his train without difficulty.¹²

It was one of the first of the Crosby-Doane hymns to be translated into a foreign language, and was played at the funeral of Princess Alice in London and by the U.S. Marine Band in 1885 on the banks of the Hudson when the body of General Grant was buried on Riverside Drive in New York. *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.* (John 10:27-28)

Doane died in South Orange, New Jersey, on December 23, 1915. He was buried in the Spring Grove Cemetery and Arboretum in Cincinnati, Ohio. He left generous bequests to Denison University, Moody Bible Institute, the Fanny Doane Home for Missionary Children, the YMCA, Baptist churches, mission halls, music students, and of course, his own family.

In his will, we read: “I give to each of my daughters, Ida F. Doane and Margaret T. Doane, One hundred thousand (\$100,000.00) dollars, to be paid as soon as practicable after the probate of this will.”¹³ It is this legacy that enabled the sisters to found The Society of Foreign Mission Welfare, officially incorporated in the State of New Jersey on March 14, 1923. And this organization, as you know, evolved into Houses of Fellowship, and became, in turn the Overseas Ministries Study Center in Ventnor, NJ, relocating to New Haven in 1987. To God be the glory!

¹² From a typed manuscript, “William Howard Doane,” written in 1931 by John Emerson Montague, in OMSC Archives, Vol. I, Section 3, Part A, Item 6.

¹³ OMSC Archives, Volume I, Section 3, Part A, Item 16.

10. To God be the Glory. *The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy!* (Psalm 126:3)

Addendum:

Marguerite Doane (1868 - 1954) was the daughter of the hymn writer William Howard Doane.¹⁴ Marguerite, along with her sister Ida, inherited a fortune from their father who was also a successful inventor and businessman. The two sisters took pleasure in devoting their substantial income to Christian causes, particularly Baptist missions. Marguerite had wanted to go overseas as a missionary herself but had been rejected as a diabetic. In her place she supported a number of substitute missionaries. Among these were Dr. and Mrs. Raphael Thomas, missionaries to the Philippine Islands. Marguerite also founded the Society for Foreign Mission Welfare. Her idea was to provide furnished apartments, rent free, for missionaries on furlough. She bought suitable ground in Ventnor, NJ and erected several buildings with various sized apartments. Missionaries were welcome to apply for periods ranging from one month to a year. Hundreds of missionaries benefited from Mrs. Doane's generosity in providing free housing.

Soon after Dr. Thomas resigned from the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (ABFMS), Marguerite Doane invited a few concerned friends to visit her home in Watch Hill, RI, in Aug. of 1927. Among the dozen or so guests were Mrs. Peabody and the Thomases. Of primary concern was the future of the Baptist work in the Philippines. A prayer meeting was held, out of which came a united commitment to form a new mission board. Mrs. Doane promised to continue the support of the Thomases if they would return to the Philippines to begin a new work. Mrs. Peabody was asked to assume the chairmanship of the new board and Marguerite Doane became the chairman of the Finance Committee.

With their substantial financial resources, the Doane sisters supported many of the early ministries of the mission: a Bible institute in Iloilo City; a college dormitory for girls, in Manila; and, a missionary retreat home in Baguio, N. Luzon.

¹⁴ http://www.abwe.org/about/marguerite_doane.asp