



**T**HUS saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. (Jer 6:16)

I was surprised when our staff reminded me I had not written on this powerful hymn. But in looking over its history, I remembered being reluctant to write about a hymn whose author was Roman Catholic and who had been a part of the Oxford Movement as well; however, the author wrote two versions of the hymn – one for the Irish with profound Roman references to Mary and the saints, and another for the English Church which I have chosen to write about here. Omitted are the lines venerating Mary such as *Faith of our Fathers! Mary's prayers Shall win our country back to thee*. In most every other respect, the hymn is a blessed expression of the faith that builds character in believers, families, and nations. The lyrics are the work of Frederick W. Faber – the Oxford Movement fellow who joined with John Henry Newman in joining with Rome in 1848.

For all of his duplicity in faith, Faber professes one everlasting virtue which possessed him. As an Englishman, Faber maintained a love for the Authorized King James Bible, of which he said, *'It lives on in the ear like music that can never be forgotten, like the sound of church bells, which the convert hardly knows he can forget.'*

The hymn was published in 1849 to the tune, *ST. CATHERINE*, by Henri F. Hemy. Though I am sorry to admit it, the Roman Catholics were not the only ones who vigorously persecuted those of the other faith. During the latter reign of King Henry VIII, many Catholics were killed for their religious beliefs. Of course, Bloody Mary (a Roman Catholic) more than made up for that period with her own burnings at the stake of Protestant bishops, priests, and lay people. Queen Elizabeth, Mary's successor, conducted her own pogrom against the Roman Catholics during her reign. Catholic believers had hiding spaces built into the walls of their home called 'Priest's Holes' where the priest could run to cover when the house was being raided. These are unsavory facts of history that I feel must be told in fairness so as not to be labelled a monger of 'fake news.'

### Faith of Our Fathers

Faith of our fathers, living still,  
In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword;  
Oh, how our hearts beat high with joy  
Whene'er we hear that glorious Word!

Refrain:

Faith of our fathers, holy faith!  
We will be true to thee till death.

Our fathers, chained in prisons dark,  
Were still in heart and conscience free;  
How sweet would be their children's fate,  
If they, like them, could die for thee!

Refrain

Faith of our fathers, we will strive  
To win all nations unto thee;  
And through the truth that comes from God,  
We all shall then be truly free.

Refrain

Faith of our fathers, we will love  
Both friend and foe in all our strife;  
And preach thee, too, as love knows how  
By kindly words and virtuous life.

Refrain

*Faith of our fathers, living still, In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword; Oh, how our hearts beat high with joy Whene'er we hear that glorious Word!* True faith cannot be burned away with fire or severed with the sword – it endures all hurts and wounds, even that of death. The cross itself is a representation of the cost of that faith and grace to us. Many great old saints of bygone days have departed this world with that cross held in view before their eyes. The innocent young lady, Joan of Ark (Jean d'Arc) of France, was burned at the stake by Roman prelates while bystanders held her requested cross before her tormented eyes. Of course, it is not faith alone that gains the victory – it is faith in the right Person, our Lord Jesus Christ! The cross reminds us, not only of the redeeming death of our Lord, but of all that the Word of God represents. It is that Glorious Word to which the hymn refers.

*Our fathers, chained in prisons dark, Were still in heart and conscience free; How sweet would be their children's fate, If they, like them, could die for thee!* The author, without specific mention, is referring to Roman Catholic believers imprisoned for their faith; but these were not the only ones persecuted in ways of horror for their faith. The Roman Catholic Church found hideous ways to torture and mutilate Protestants long before the advent of the Great Reformation. Hanging a victim up by the thumbs and applying strips of Sulphur to their backs to burn slowly while the Inquisitors were out to tea was not entirely free of reprobation. The hope expressed is that our children should be blessed by such a death of persecution that the Roman Catholics expressed. This is not expressly stated, but it is the meaning in the mind of the author. Words are words, and those same words equally apply to all true believers who have suffered for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I must question the depth of Faber's faith in being Roman Catholic, and rewriting the hymn to accommodate those of the Protestant faith. It was perhaps done for privilege and wider acceptance.

*Faith of our fathers, we will strive To win all nations unto thee; And through the truth that comes from God, We all shall then be truly free.* In a certain sense, I am edified by this hymn's ability to cover the soul's desire of both Roman Catholics and Protestant Catholics. We must have that deep-seated soul's desire to reach every nation with the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. All truth comes from God, and His Word is the great liberator. *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* (John 8:31-32)

*Faith of our fathers, we will love Both friend and foe in all our strife; And preach thee, too, as love knows how By kindly words and virtuous life.* The whole key to understanding this hymn, omitting the Roman references, is found in the single theme of its title – *FAITH OF OUR FATHERS*. It is growing increasingly clear that the American people, for the most part, have forgotten that ancient faith and resorted to hedonism, idolatry, sorcery (drug abuse), perversion in sex, infidelity, and immorality at every level including even dress. Only sixty years ago, a person would be arrested for using foul language or cursing in public. Decent clothing was required if one would enter any public place. Divorce was heard of, but not known in most communities, the entire state of Georgia was dry to alcohol sales and consumption (along with many others), Illegal aliens knew better than to break our laws by coming, churches were filled on Sunday, and the message preached was not usually watered down with politically correct bologna. I never saw any Bible but the King James Version until I walked into an Army chapel and discovered all of those KJV's had been removed and replaced with 'Good News for Modern Man. The Books of Common Prayer were also confiscated from the Protestant chapels in that same year. Abortion became a means of birth control, prayer and Bible reading had already been forcibly eliminated from our public schools, and a new idea came into being – the same taught by the Serpent in the Garden – If it feels good, do it!

What happened to polite society in America. The hymn calls upon our observance of *Kindly words and virtuous life*. Surely we can admit that those two qualities have been eradicated from American society at large. This last stanza suggests a solution to bringing such virtues back – LOVE. Love of God, love of family, love of neighbors, and love of country will insure peace and tranquility that is unmatched in any other circumstance. Even our Protestant religion has been perverted and corrupted by greedy men who are crowd-pleasers. I will not make use of a biblical commentary written less than 100 years ago. I do not want the 'new' Christian religion. I desire that

Old Time Religion – the same preached by our Lord, by His apostles, by the martyrs of the faith of all era's. I am tired of playing word games, I want the true Word that falls from the very lips of God. Drink not upstream of the herd, my father counseled. I take that seriously, do you?