



This moving hymn was first written as a centennial anniversary hymn for the State of Connecticut and later amended by its author, Leonard Bacon (1802-1881) as an American Anniversary hymn in 1833. The musical score is entitled, *Duke Street*, by John Hatton in 1793.

The hymn addresses the Providence of God in ruling in the affairs of nations and people.

O God, Beneath Thy Guiding Hand

O God, beneath Thy guiding hand
Our exiled fathers crossed the sea,
And when they trod the wintry strand,
With prayer and psalm they worshiped Thee

Thou heard'st, well pleased, the song, the prayer;
Thy blessing came, and still its pow'r
Shall onward through all ages bear
The memory of that holy hour.

Laws, freedom, truth, and faith in God
Came with those exiles o'er the waves,
And where their pilgrim feet have trod,
The God they trusted guards their graves.

And here Thy name, O God of love,
Their children's children shall adore,
Till these eternal hills remove,
And spring adorns the earth no more.

O God, beneath Thy guiding hand Our exiled fathers crossed the sea, And when they trod the wintry strand, With prayer and psalm they worshiped Thee. The Hand of God's Providence was active in the founding of America long before the continent was discovered. He predestined its formulation in the infinities of time past. Through tempest, shoals and billows it is His steady hand that kept the Pilgrim Ship upright with bow directed to the happy landing of a New World. They fled from religious persecution to make a homeland beyond the blue waters where no foreign hand could refuse their purpose in serving our Lord. The first action taken by the Pilgrim Fathers was to plant a cross on the shore and to lift their prayers of Thanksgiving for the Beneficent Providence extended to them. At least two centuries went past before those prayers were lessened in any degree. Today, many who make their homes along the New England coast, even all coastal waters of America, have forgotten the Hand that Preserved and Blessed them with a mighty outpouring in olden days.

Thou heard'st, well pleased, the song, the prayer; Thy blessing came, and still its pow'r Shall onward through all ages bear The memory of that holy hour. The author writes with an unparalleled confidence in his fellow human being. While it is true that God has heard and answered our prayers uttered in times of distress, thanksgiving, worship and National Danger; and that His Hand has preserved us a mighty and blessed nation above the nations of the world thus far; it is also true that we have forgotten that Providence of Heaven and gone whoring after lesser gods such as pride, filthy lucre, prestige, drugs, and a host of others. Our God has withheld His hand of harsh judgment until this hour, but He is not likely to withhold that Hand for many more moons. Our iniquity is becoming brim-full, and that is when God most often takes a terrible judgment against those who have known Him and yet turned away from His favor and grace. Though we may bear the memory, we must as well ACT upon that memory to preserve our Godly heritage by passing it down to succeeding generations. As Kipling wrote:

Recessional

God of our fathers, known of old,
Lord of our far flung battle line,
Beneath whose awful hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The captains and the kings depart:
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Far called, our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire:
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the Law—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard,
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding, calls not Thee to guard,
For frantic boast and foolish word—
Thy mercy on Thy people, Lord!

It is imperative to the understanding of Kipling's warning hymn to note the eight repetitions of the phrase, "Lest we forget." Therein lies his stated condition for the favor of God on a nation and her people.

Laws, freedom, truth, and faith in God Came with those exiles o'er the waves, And where their pilgrim feet have trod, The God they trusted guards their graves. In a multitude of laws is the oppression of a nation - have we forgotten? Freedom is worth dying for, repression makes life unworthy the living - have we forgotten? Truth is the champion of free people - have we forgotten? Faith in God is the badge of our election in Christ - have we forgotten? The God we trust will also preserve us and our posterity provided we do not forget. Our Lord is a gentleman (Señor Jesús, as the Spanish say). He does not impose where He is not invited. Since we have rejected the mention of His name in the halls of government, public schools, and every public forum, do we have the right to implore His blessings of protection and prosperity upon us? Have we forgotten?

And here Thy name, O God of love, Their children's children shall adore, Till these eternal hills remove, And spring adorns the earth no more. I beseech the American people to once more train up their children to know and to love the God of Love who breathed the breath of life into their nostrils while they were yet inanimate bodies. God's Providence is provisional: *For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.* (Isaiah 54:10)

Let us as a nation continue to secure to ourselves and our nation the blessings of liberty and equal justice for all peoples!