



*<sup>9</sup>But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: <sup>10</sup>Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. <sup>11</sup>Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; <sup>12</sup>Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. (1 Peter 2:9-12)*

*<sup>12</sup>Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. <sup>13</sup>These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. <sup>14</sup>For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. <sup>15</sup>And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. <sup>16</sup>But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. (Heb 11:12-16)*

In view of recent developments in the course of our American nation, the words of the biblical text above and the words of the old American folk hymn take on profound relevancy to our present moral crisis. The hymn (*Wayfaring Stranger*) has no specific author other than those courageous pilgrims and strangers who gathered on the fair shores of America from every known corner of the world seeking liberty and freedom, or else were brought in chains as slaves to labor in the hot suns of the southland. There are bits of the Irish, the English, the African, and God only knows what other ethnic components, that are contained within its lines. The hymn is well over two hundred years old and was sung around the time of the American Revolution.

Many of those who swarmed to America were seeking to worship their God freely and without religious persecution. Others simply wanted to breathe free. Those who came as slaves or indentured servants finally realized a freedom that far exceeded that of their homelands. But ALL were pilgrims and strangers who came to a strange new land. The words are tempered by a spiritual dependence upon God and a loneliness of separation from loved ones abroad. But the greater message is that of every Christian of every tribe and nation on this earth – all pilgrims and strangers who are looked upon by the world with contempt and brimming hatred.

## Poor Wayfaring Stranger

I am a poor wayfaring stranger,  
While traveling through this world of woe.  
Yet there's no sickness, toil nor danger  
In that bright world to which I go.  
I'm going there to see my Father;  
I'm going there no more to roam.

*Refrain*

I'm only going over Jordan,  
I'm only going over home.

I know dark clouds will gather round me;  
I know my way is rough and steep.  
But golden fields lie out before me  
Where God's redeemed shall ever sleep.  
I'm going there to see my mother,  
She said she'd meet me when I come.

*Refrain*

I'll soon be free from every trial,  
My body sleep in the churchyard;  
I'll drop the cross of self denial  
And enter on my great reward.  
I'm going there to see my Savior,  
To sing His praise forevermore.

*Refrain*

*I am a poor wayfaring stranger, While traveling through this world of woe. Yet there's no sickness, toil nor danger In that bright world to which I go. I'm going there to see my Father; I'm going there no more to roam.* People of Irish, Scots, English, German, French, etc. descent were scattered from the Adirondack Mountains of New England, along the coastlines, the Appalachian Mountains, and the Midwest. They paid a price for their separation from familiar family and friends to live in the then-desolate wilderness areas of America. Their hearts yearned for home and hearth, yet nothing to them was more highly treasured than their freedom to speak and believe whatsoever they believed the Holy Scriptures revealed to their weary souls. The world today is still one of woe to the true believer in Christ. It is quite alright, as far as the world is concerned, to believe in Buddhism, Hinduism, and, especially, Mohammanism, without reprisal; but the world cannot tolerate Christ. Christ is uncompromising with the cherished evils of the world and keeps getting in the way. Better live in a wilderness area with the bright hope of Heaven, than a palatial estate in fear of the coming judgment. Once the pilgrimage of the Christian draws to an end, what a bountiful blessing awaits – an eternal bliss that is not subject to the fickle whims of politics of social pressures.

*I know dark clouds will gather round me; I know my way is rough and steep. But golden fields lie out before me Where God's redeemed shall ever sleep. I'm going there to see my mother, She said she'd meet me when I come.* It is nigh impossible to cross the Atlantic Ocean from Europe to America without encountering devastating storms. In fact, the Atlantic is noted for such immoderate weather. But, if one wanted a better land than the oppressive climes of Europe, he must cross that sea and battle those storms and headwinds. Life is not different. We are traveling a wilderness in this life not so much different from that of the Hebrew Children in traversing the Wilderness prior to coming into the Land of Promise. Every tribe and nations which Israel confronted in the

Wilderness tried to destroy them.

It is the same for the Christian in this world. Satan began by gentle taunts against the strong faith of America years and decades ago. "Just allow us to teach evolution side-by-side with creation science and we shall be happy." "Just allow us to teach the philosophy of Marx and Engels along with your teaching of Christian values in public schools and we shall be glad." "Just allow us to corrupt your money system by undermining any real value of the dollar, and you will retain your own wealth." "Let us abrogate certain provisions of the US Constitution by imposing a tax that is not equally shared by every citizen and we shall leave the rest alone" We allowed the Trojan Horse into our gates, and now we are paying the price with a bankrupting Keynesian economy that has only one destiny – the bottomless pit. But the hope of the Christian is not this world, although he is called upon to vigorously oppose the sins of this world. The destiny of the Christian believer is not of this world, but of Heaven where he shall join those loved ones who await his coming 'cross Jordan's Waters. The poor indentured servant had hope of that, the enterprising industrialist had hope of that, and the slave of the field had that same hope.

*I'll soon be free from every trial, My body sleep in the churchyard; I'll drop the cross of self denial And enter on my great reward. I'm going there to see my Savior, To sing His praise forevermore.* The reward of the faithful is not gold, silver, and precious stones of perishable mineral content, but rather imperishable stones of love, devotion, loyalty, and security that only God can provide. Each of us is destined for our bed of dying at some future point determined by God. *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.* (Heb 9:27) We are cross-bearers in this life, but not the next! The greater reward will not be the mansion prepared for us, or the splendor of the streets of gold; but rather the Savior whom we shall meet face-to-face. Life does not end where Heaven begins – it is just the opposite. We will not sit on fluffy clouds all day and play harps – but will be involved with the Father's direct business. We shall learn all mysteries and be satisfied with all knowledge daily.

*The Refrain*

*I'm only going over Jordan, I'm only going over home.* Too many churches are trying to make the world their home by bringing the world into the holy place when they should be trying to take the holy place to the world. But our home is not this world – it is Heaven. The true Christian can never feel at home in this world because the world is forever at odds with our faith and values. Crossing over Jordan Banks at the moment of death, we shall cross from the sinful and contrary state of the world into the bliss of perfection and undying love in Christ. We are soldiers – men, women, and children – who have fought the good fight, wandered in the wilderness, and have now come home to its comforts and loved ones.

You may recall the famous words of John Bunyan in *Pilgrims Progress* in describing the going home of "Mr. Valiant for Truth":

After this it was noised abroad that Mr. Valiant-for-truth was taken with a Summons by the same Post as the other, and had this for a Token that the Summons was true, That his pitcher was broken at the Fountain. When he understood it, he called for his Friends, and told them of it. Then said he, I am going to my Fathers, and tho' with great difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the Trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My Sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my Pilgrimage, and my Courage and my Skill to him that can get it. My Marks and Scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me that I have fought his Battles who now will be my Rewarder. When the day that he must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the River-side, into which as he went he said, Death, where is thy Sting? And as he went down deeper he

said, Grave, where is thy Victory? So he passed over, and all the Trumpets sounded for him on the other side. — John Bunyan, *Pilgrims Progress*