



AND it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, 11 And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; 12 Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. 13 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. 14 Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; (Deuteronomy 6:10-14)

Here is a classic hymn reflecting the greatness of the British Commonwealth and its imminent decline lest they forget the God who had so richly blessed their arms in battle and their labors of empire-building. The hymn is written by none other than the great writer of exploits, Rudyard Kipling, on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897 - queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (1837–1901).

Though I have referenced this great poem often, I have yet, until today, written a devotion upon the hymn it came to be. There are a number of tunes to which the hymn has been sung. My favorite is *ST. CATHERINE* by Henri F. Hemy (1865), but the 1940 Hymnal suggests the tune, *OLD HUNDRED TWELFTH*– a German tune by Johann Walther which he presented to Martin Luther to accompany his *LORD'S PRAYER* in 1530.

A Recessional Hymn in traditional Anglican worship signifies the hymn for the closing of the service, or end. The pride of Great Britain was riding high on their successes as a great empire upon whose commonwealth the sun never sat. They were, as well, masters of the ocean seas. But Kipling foresaw the potential of that pride to destroy the greatness of the empire and her people – and Kipling was right to remind the people God raises up, and God is able to debase.

God of our Fathers - a Recessional

by Rudyard Kipling, 1897

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!

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! Though this hymn was intended to ameliorate the high pride of the British Empire and people, it definitely presents a warning to the entire western culture of nations and people. The dominion Great Britain, and the western powers, enjoyed over the past two centuries were attributable to their faith in God and reliance upon His righteous Hand to lead them in bringing greater Light to the many masses who sat in darkness with no knowledge of the Holy. To abuse that leading is to incur the wrath of the same God who blesses. Forgetfulness occurs through careless neglect and false pride. Remembrance requires a conscious effort. So, let us restore the moral teachings of the Holy Bible to our youth and all others if we will survive as nations blest of God.

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! Pride leads the list of all sins the Lord hates

because it is parent to all the others; in fact, pride is what led to the fall of Lucifer – the master of sinners. *“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: **A proud look**, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.”* Proverbs 6:16-19 (KJV) Have we forgotten how our arms, as well as those of Great Britain, were favored on so many hard-fought battlefields by the Lord of Hosts? *“With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles.”* 2 Chronicles 32:8 (KJV) When the victory seemed impossible by the might of our arms, the Lord has so often turned defeat into miraculous victory – not by our might, but by His! Humility in victory is the signet ring of a great nation. Are we? (i.e. the defeat of the Spanish Armada and the victory at Yorktown, and the victories at Trenton by Washington in 1776–77. Normandy and the Landing at Inchon were also stark reminders of God’s blessing of our arms in battle).

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! The glory of the Western nations fades as a dim star on the distant horizon. We have forgotten the Lord who made us and who crowned us with victory, who raised us from the idolatrous depths of paganism to the very heights of heaven through the preaching of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by the early Apostles and their emissaries. Yet, we suffer from spiritual amnesia. The Name of the One to whom we prayed for victory at Bunker Hill, Valley Forge, Gettysburg, Flanders, Normandy, and the Pusan Perimeter has all but been repudiated by the very peoples whom He so richly blessed at our founding. Instead of alabaster buildings of gleaming white and amber waves of grain on the high plains, we shall instead become deserts and dunes of the wilderness if we continue on our present course of godlessness.

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! On the eve of the Desert Storm Operation in Iraq, churches and peoples turned out across the landscape of America to pray for victory and to relieve the military forces of a great loss of lives. Commendable! It was anticipated that as many as 60,000 casualties could occur in the first four hours of battle; however, there were only 154 killed in battle during that engagement. Ironically, the churches did not turn out in the same intensity to thank God for His providential hand of mercy to us in that result. Instead, TV monitors were aglow with the brilliance with which we prosecuted the war. Of course, our soldiers-at-arms performed admirably and with patriotic fervor, but those values resulted from an institutional and traditional faith that *‘might makes right.’* But we forgot the One who always gives the victory in war and peace: *“The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name..”* (Exodus 15:3) We are ALL “lesser breeds” without the Law of God – that is Kipling’s point here.

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! Can the dust from which we are created be worthy of any victory in battle – NO! The Lord God breathed the breath of life into our souls and quickened the hearts of His people by the agency of His Holy Spirit. We become what we are by virtue of His calling and choice. Without His making us alive and free, we would remain in trespasses and sin. The dead have no will except a self-will – nothing free about such a will. Freedom to sin is not freedom. The only true freedom is found in Christ. That is the only FREE Will that exists in the Kingdom of Heaven. But though we have spiritual relapses, it is never too late to turn back to the God of our Fathers in repentance and prayer. Our boasting means nothing. Our foolish academics who pretend greater knowledge than their Maker are without any standing

with the Lord. They boast of knowing the origins of life, yet, they cannot make even a tiny flea to live. They boast of knowing the effects of global warming in twelve years, but cannot predict, with certainty, if the weather will be rainy or clear either tomorrow or next week. Let us heed the counsel of the Apostle Paul to Timothy: *“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.”* (1 Timothy 6:20-21)