

IF THOU BUT SUFFER GOD TO GUIDE THEE

Quite a few years ago, nearly all the boys wanted to wear coonskin caps. Another year all the boys and girls played with “hoola” hoops. Every once in awhile a new “fad” seems to take hold of everyone. A “fad” is something that is very popular for a short while – and then it goes out of style.

One reason for learning the great hymns of the Church is that – unlike fads and popular songs – good hymns last forever. Look through your hymnbook to see how many hymns were written in the 1800s or the 1700s or even longer ago than that!

Just imagine! Over 300 years ago, when your great-great-great-great-great-grandfather was about your age, he was singing the same hymn that you and many other boys and girls are learning: *If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee*.

This hymn teaches us something we will always want to remember – that if we let God be our guide in the choices we make as we grow up, then He will give us the strength to help us through any troubles or problems we might meet throughout our lifetime.

This promise must have worked for our grandfathers because since they were little boys, our world has been through at least a dozen wars, many earthquakes and floods and tornadoes, and many different sicknesses – and yet, all of us today have a more wonderful place to live than grandfather ever dreamed could be possible.

Isn't it good to sing the 2nd and 3rd stanzas and know that we have been chosen by God for His very own, and that God needs us to sing, pray and live so as to teach others by our example, about His ways.

It might be fun for you and your choir friends to discover in what countries your own great-g-g-g-g grandfathers lived. What language would have been spoken? Can you find that country on the map? Is it a free country today or do we need to pray to God to help the people there to re-discover the meaning and the opportunity for freedom?

George Neumark, who wrote both the text and tune, as a young man traveling to begin his work at the university, was attacked by robbers who robbed him of all his money and valuables. This left him destitute so he could not continue his education. Discouraged, out of money, not knowing what to do, he was offered a position of tutoring the children of a wealthy family. From this experience and in his deep gratitude to God, he was able to write our hymn to show mankind's need for faith and hope: *If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee*.

Why not make a list of all the hymns you know and try to discover in what country they were first written? When you grow up, perhaps you'd like to travel around the world singing hymns so that Christians in every country would recognize the tunes and sing along with you . . . in their own language, of course. It's a good idea so that all the world would be thinking more together instead of everyone thinking in all directions, isn't it?

