

November 2, 2026

To Side with Truth

Someone who has been a life-long Presbyterian will have to tell me if this hymn was ever in your hymnal. When I was growing up it was page 242 in the Methodist hymnal until it was dropped from the 1989 edition for a variety of reasons. Maybe the first one was because the “moment to decide” comes to all of us more than once. Every day, we have the opportunity to choose between good and evil, truth and falsehood. Also, there is no comfortable way to get around the gender-specific “man” in the title and first line. But I still find the hymn ***Once To Every Man and Nation*** inspiring.

Originally, it was a poem written by James Russel Lowell as a protest against the Mexican-American War called *The Present Crisis*. In the light of our present crisis, in a day of incredible misinformation and outright falsehood in our political discourse and social media, the call “to side with truth” is just as timely as it was in 1845.

Once to every man and nation
Comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of truth with falsehood,
For the good or evil side;
Some great cause, God's new Messiah,
Offering each the bloom or blight,
And the choice goes by forever
Twixt that darkness and that light.

2 Then to side with truth is noble,
When we share her wretched crust,
Ere her cause bring fame and profit,
And 'tis prosperous to be just;
Then it is the brave man chooses

While the coward stands aside,
Till the multitude make virtue
Of the faith they had denied.

3 By the light of burning martyrs,
Christ, Thy bleeding feet we track,
Toiling up new Calvaries ever
With the cross that turns not back;
New occasions teach new duties,
Time makes ancient good uncouth;
They must upward still and onward,
Who would keep abreast of truth.

4 Though the cause of evil prosper,
Yet 'tis truth alone is strong;
Though her portion be the scaffold,
And upon the throne be wrong:
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
And, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow
Keeping watch above His own.

If you are unfamiliar with the hymn and its incredibly powerful tune, take a moment to listen:

Click here to Listen

~Written by Jack Harnish

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