All too often many Christians accept religious ideas and doctrines without first researching the facts to prove their worthiness. The same goes for some songs that have been placed by publishers into Protestant hymn books. This is the case with a Roman Catholic song that has been accepted and sung by millions of Protestants unaware of its history and true meaning.

The author of "Faith of Our Fathers", Frederick William Faber was born in Yorkshire, England, June 28, 1814. He entered Oxford in 1832 and while there came under the influence of John Henry Newman, the vicar of St. Mary's University Church. Newman later became the most prominent English Roman Catholic scholar of the 19th century. In 1837, Faber received the orders of a deacon followed by the priestly orders two years later in the Church of England. He then spent about four years traveling in Europe during which time he developed a leaning toward Roman Catholic beliefs and practices. After his graduation from the university in 1843, he became the rector of a small parish in Elton, England.

Faber was raised as a strict Calvinist in an English minister's home of Huguenot ancestry and was opposed to the doctrinal tenets of the Roman Church. During his college years and his travels in Europe he came under the influence of a strong religious persuasion known as the Oxford or Tractarian Movement. The Oxford movement stressed that a true religious experience was only derived through a liturgical and ceremonial church service. After serving as a Church of England minister for two years, he resigned his parish and joined the Roman Catholic Church and became known as Father Wilfrid.

After being a part of the Church of England and seeing the influence that religious hymns had upon the fervor and outreach of the Protestant faith, Faber was determined to have the same
for the Roman Catholic faith. He realized there was a severe lack of congregational hymns and singing in Catholic churches. Faber then made it his lifelong mission to compose hymns in support of Roman Catholic beliefs, practices and history. He wrote a total of 150 hymns and was honored by the Pope with a Doctor of Divinity degree before an early death at 49 years old on September 26, 1863 while working in Roman Catholic institutions in London.

Faber's hymn "Faith of Our Fathers" was written to remind Catholic parishioners of the suffering and martyrdom their forefathers endured during the reign of King Henry VIII and the protestant Queen Elizabeth. He published it in his 1849 collection entitled, "Jesus and Mary; or Catholic Hymns for Singing and Reading." The tune was composed by the Roman Catholic organist, Henri Hemy. In the following verse, which is omitted in Protestant hymn books, expressed his desire that England would someday return to the Roman Catholic faith.

Faith of our fathers! Mary's prayers
Shall win our country back to thee;
And from the truth that comes from God,
England shall then indeed be free.
Faith of our Fathers, Holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death.

In 1862, Faber wrote another well-known hymn found in most Protestant hymn books; "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy." He patterned many of his songs after William Cowper, John Newton and John Wesley which portrayed God's far reaching mercy and love for His people. Commenting on the content of Faber's hymns, the authors of "The Hymns and Hymn Writers of the Church" wrote; "His hymns abound in Mariolatry and other un-Protestant and, as we think, unchristian elements – well-nigh all of them have to be altered to adapt them to Protestant worship... It has been found necessary, however, to eliminate objectionable Romish expressions from many of his hymns in order to adapt them to use in Protestant worship."