The Battle Hymn of the Republic

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(Redirected from Battle Hymn of the Republic)

"**The Battle Hymn of the Republic**" is a hymn by American writer Julia Ward Howe using the music from the song "John Brown's Body". Howe's more famous lyrics were written in November 1861 and first published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in February 1862. The song links the judgment of the wicked at the end of time (New Testament, Rev. 19) with the American Civil War. Since that time it has become an extremely popular and well-known American patriotic song.

"The Battle Hymn of the Republic"

Cover of the 1862 sheet music for "The Battle Hymn of the Republic"

Lyrics Julia Ward Howe, 1861

Music William Steffe, 1856; arranged by James E. Greenleaf, C. S. Hall, and C. B. Marsh, 1861

Music sample

"The Battle Hymn of the Republic", performed by Frank C. Stanley, Elise Stevenson, and a mixed quartet in 1908.

0:00 MENU

Contents

- 1 History
  - 1.1 As the "John Brown's Body" Song
    - 1.1.1 Kimball's account
  - 1.2 Creation of the "Battle Hymn"
- 2 Score
- 3 Lyrics
- 4 Influence
  - 4.1 Popularity and widespread use
  - 4.2 Recordings and public performances
  - 4.3 Cultural influences
  - 4.4 Spanish version
  - 4.5 Other songs set to this tune
- 5 Media
- 6 See also
- 7 References
- 8 Further reading
- 9 External links
  - 9.1 Sheet music
  - 9.2 Audio

History

The tune was written around 1856 by William Steffe. The first known lyrics were called "Canaan's Happy Shore" or "Brothers, Will You Meet Me?" and the song was sung as a campfire spiritual. The tune spread across the United States.

As the "John Brown's Body" Song

At a flag-raising ceremony at Fort Warren, near Boston, on Sunday May 12, 1861, the *John Brown* song was publicly played "perhaps for the first time". The American Civil War had begun the previous month.

Newspapers reported troops singing the song as they marched in the streets of Boston on July 18, 1861, and there were a "rash" of broadside printings of the song with substantially the same words as the undated *John Brown Song!* broadside, stated by Kimball to be the first published edition, and the broadside with music by C. S. Marsh copyrighted on July 16, 1861, also published by C.S. Hall (see images displayed on this page). Other publishers also came out with versions of the John Brown Song and claimed copyright.[1]

Kimball's account

In 1890, George Kimball wrote his account of how the 2nd Infantry Battalion of the Massachusetts militia, known as the "Tiger" Battalion, collectively worked out the lyrics to "John Brown's Body". Kimball wrote:

> We had a jovial Scotchman in the battalion, named John Brown. . . . and as he happened to bear the identical name of the old hero of Harper's Ferry, he became at once the butt of his comrades. If he made his appearance a few minutes late among the working squad, or was a little tardy in falling into the company line, he was sure to be greeted with such expressions as "Come, old fellow, you ought to be at it if you are going to help us free the slaves"; or, "This can't be John Brown--why, John Brown is dead." And then some wag would add, in a solemn, drawling tone, as if it were his purpose to give particular emphasis to the fact that John Brown was really, actually dead: "Yes, yes, poor old John Brown is dead; his body lies mouldering in the grave."[2]

According to Kimball, these sayings became by-words among the soldiers and, in a communal effort—similar in many ways to the spontaneous composition of camp meeting songs described above—were gradually put to the tune of "Say, Brothers":

> Finally ditties composed of the most nonsensical, doggerel rhymes, setting for the fact that John Brown was dead and that his body was undergoing the process of decomposition, began to be sung to the music of the hymn above given. These ditties underwent various ramifications, until eventually the lines were reached,--
>
> "John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave,
>
> His soul's marching on."
>
> And,--
>
> "He's gone to be a soldier in the army of the Lord,
>
> His soul's marching on."
>
> These lines seemed to give general satisfaction, the idea that Brown's soul was "marching on" receiving recognition at once as having a germ of inspiration in it. They were sung over and over again with a great deal of gusto, the "Glory hallelujah" chorus being always added.[2]

Some leaders of the battalion, feeling the words were coarse and irreverent, tried to urge the adoption of more fitting lyrics, but to no avail. The lyrics were soon prepared for publication by members of the battalion, together with publisher C. S. Hall. They selected and polished verses they felt appropriate, and may even have enlisted the services of a local poet to help polish and create verses.[3]

THE

ATLANTIC MONTHLY.

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BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC.

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword:
His truth is marching on.

I have seen His in the watchfires of a hundred circling camps;
They have building Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and daring lamps:
His day is marching on.

I have read a fiery gospel writ in burnished rows of steel:
"As ye deal with my contemners, so with you my grace shall deal;
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel,
Since God is marching on."

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment-seat:
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me:
As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on.

As originally published 1862 in *The Atlantic Monthly*

Creation of the "Battle Hymn"

Kimball's battalion was dispatched to Murray, Kentucky early in the Civil War, and Julia Ward Howe heard this song during a public review of the troops outside Washington on Upton Hill, Virginia. Rufus R. Dawes, then in command of Company "K" of the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, stated in his memoirs that the man who started the singing was Sergeant John Ticknor of his company. Howe's companion at the review, the Reverend James Freeman Clarke,[6] suggested to Howe that she write new words for the fighting men's song. Staying at the Willard Hotel in Washington on the night of November 18, 1861, Howe awoke with the words of the song in her mind and in near darkness wrote the verses to the "Battle Hymn of the Republic".[7] Of the writing of the lyrics, Howe remembered:

> I went to bed that night as usual, and slept, according to my wont, quite soundly. I awoke in the gray of the morning twilight; and as I lay waiting for the dawn, the long lines of the desired poem began to twine themselves in my mind. Having thought out all the stanzas, I said to myself, 'I must get up and write these verses down, lest I fall asleep again and forget them.' So, with a sudden effort, I sprang out of bed, and found in the dimness an old stump of a pen which I remembered to have used the day before. I scrawled the verses almost without looking at the paper.[8]

Howe's "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" was first published on the front page of *The Atlantic Monthly* of February 1862. The sixth verse written by Howe, which is less commonly sung, was not published at that time. The song was also published as a broadside in 1863 by the Supervisory Committee for Recruiting Colored Regiments in Philadelphia.

Both "John Brown" and "Battle Hymn of the Republic" were published in Father Kemp's *Old Folks Concert Tunes* in 1874 and reprinted in 1889. Both songs had the same Chorus with an additional "Glory" in the second line: "Glory! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!"[9]

Julia Ward Howe was the wife of Samuel Gridley Howe, the famed scholar in education of the blind. Samuel and Julia were also active leaders in anti-slavery politics and strong supporters of the Union. Samuel Howe was a member of the Secret Six, the group who funded John Brown's work.

Score

"Canaan's Happy Shore" has a verse and chorus of equal metrical length and both verse and chorus share an identical melody and rhythm. "John Brown's Body" has more syllables in its verse and uses a more rhythmically active variation of the "Canaan" melody to accommodate the additional words in the verse. In Howe's lyrics, the words of the verse are packed into a yet longer line, with even more syllables than "John Brown's Body". The verse still uses the same underlying melody as the refrain, but the addition of many dotted rhythms to the underlying melody allows for the more complex verse to fit the same melody as the comparatively short refrain.

One version of the melody, in C major, begins as below. This is an example of the mediant-octave modal frame.

Lyrics

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword:
His truth is marching on.

(**Chorus**)
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps,
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps:
His day is marching on.

(**Chorus**)
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
His day is marching on.

I have read a fiery gospel writ in burnished rows of steel:
"As ye deal with my contemners, so with you my grace shall deal;
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel,
Since God is marching on.

(**Chorus**)
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Since God is marching on.

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment-seat:
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.

(**Chorus**)
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me.
As He died to make men holy, let us live to make men free,
While God is marching on.

(**Chorus**)
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
While God is marching on.

He is coming like the glory of the morning on the wave,
He is Wisdom to the mighty, He is Succour to the brave,
So the world shall be His footstool, and the soul of Time His slave,
Our God is marching on.

(**Chorus**)
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Our God is marching on.

Influence

Popularity and widespread use

In the years since the Civil War, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" has been used frequently as an American patriotic song.[10] This song is usually heard at the national conventions of both the Republican Party and Democratic Party,[*citation needed*] and is often sung at Presidential inaugurations.

The song was notably played on September 14, 2001 at the Washington National Cathedral and at St Paul's Cathedral in London during memorial services for the victims of the September 11 attacks.

This was one of Sir Winston Churchill's favorite songs. At his request this song was played at his funeral in St Paul's Cathedral in 1965.

The Marine Corps Band performed it when Pope Benedict XVI was greeted on the South Lawn of the White House by President George W. Bush on April 16, 2008.

Recordings and public performances

In 1960 the Mormon Tabernacle Choir won the Grammy Award for Best Performance by a Vocal Group or Chorus. The 45 rpm single record, which was arranged and edited by Columbia Records and Cleveland disk jockey Bill Randle, was an unlikely commercial success and reached #13 on Billboard's Hot 100 the previous autumn.[11]

Judy Garland performed this song on her weekly television show in December 1963. She originally wanted to do a dedication show for President John F. Kennedy upon his assassination but CBS would not let her, so she performed the song without being able to mention his name.[12]

Andy Williams experienced commercial success in 1968 with an a cappella version recorded at Robert Kennedy's funeral. Backed by the St. Charles Borromeo choir, this version peaked at Billboard #33 pop, #11 easy listening.

Whitney Houston performed this song at her March 31, 1991 concert to the troops called "Welcome Home Heroes" also in Shanghai and Beijing on July 22, and July 25, 2004 during the Soul Divas Tour.

The Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir also sang this song at President Barack Obama's Second Presidential Inauguration Ceremony on January 21, 2013.

Jaye P. Morgan recorded this song on her 1960 MGM Records album titled "Up North."

Cultural influences

Words from the first verse gave John Steinbeck's wife Carol Steinbeck the title of his 1939 masterpiece *The Grapes of Wrath*.[13] The title of John Updike's *In the Beauty of the Lilies* also came from this song, as did *Terrible Swift Sword* and *Never Call Retreat*, two volumes in Bruce Catton's *Centennial History of the Civil War*. *Terrible Swift Sword* is also the name of a board wargame simulating the Battle of Gettysburg.[14]

The lyrics of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" appear in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s sermons and speeches, most notably in his speech "How Long, Not Long" from the steps of the Alabama State Capitol building on March 25, 1965 after the 3rd Selma March, and in his final sermon "I've Been to the Mountaintop", delivered in Memphis, Tennessee on the evening of April 3, 1968, the night before his assassination. In fact, the latter sermon, King's last public words, ends with the first lyrics of the "Battle Hymn", "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."

The tune has played a role in many movies where patriotic music has been required, including the 1970 World War II war comedy *Kelly's Heroes*, and the 1997 sci-fi western *Wild Wild West*.

Spanish version

The tune with the following alternative lyrics in Spanish is a popular hymn used in Catholic churches in Latin America.

¿Has oído las cadencias de una marcha sin igual,
que satura de victoria la conciencia terrenal?
Sus acentos melodiosos son emblema celestial,
de gloria y devoción.

Gloria, gloria, aleluya.
Gloria, gloria, aleluya.
Gloria, gloria, aleluya.
Jesús es el Señor.

Es la Iglesia que en su marcha representa la deidad,
y a su paso va tocando la creciente humanidad
con palabras cuyo efecto reproducen con verdad
completa salvación.

(chorus)

En las filas del Maestro soy valiente luchador
que buscando a los perdidos me dedico con valor.
No me arredran los conflictos ni la dura oposición.
Jesús es mi Señor.

(chorus)
(chorus)

¡Amén! ¡Amén!

Other songs set to this tune

- Marching Song of the First Arkansas is one of the few Civil War-era songs inspired by the lyrical structure of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and the tune of "John Brown's Body" that is still performed and recorded today. The "Marching Song" has been described as "a powerful early statement of black pride, militancy, and desire for full equality, revealing the aspirations of black soldiers for Reconstruction as well as anticipating the spirit of the civil rights movement of the 1960s."[15]

- The tune has been used with alternative lyrics numerous times. The University of Georgia's fight song, “Glory Glory to Old Georgia,” is based on the patriotic tune, and has been sung at American college football games since 1909. Other college teams also use songs set to the same tune. One such is "Glory, Glory to Old Auburn" at Auburn University. Another is "Glory Colorado", traditionally played by the band and sung after touchdowns scored by the Colorado Buffaloes. "Glory Colorado" has been a fight song at the University of Colorado (Boulder) for more than one hundred years.

- Another famous variant is "Solidarity Forever", a marching song for organized labor in the 20th century.[16] It was also the basis for the anthem of the American consumers' cooperative movement, "The Battle Hymn of Cooperation", written in 1932.

- The United States Army paratrooper song, "Blood on the Risers", first sung in World War II, is set to the tune of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic".

- A number of terrace songs (in association football) are sung to the tune in Britain. Most frequently, fans chant "Glory, Glory..." plus their team's name: the chants have been recorded and released officially as songs by Hibernian, Tottenham, Leeds United and Manchester United. Other chants include "We're not Brazil, we're Northern Ireland". The 1994 World Cup official song "Gloryland" interpreted by Daryl Hall and the Sounds of Blackness has the tune of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic".[17] In Argentina the St. Alban's former Pupils Assn (Old Philomathian Club) used the tune for its "Glory Glory Philomathians" as well. Not heard often nowadays it is still a cherished song for the Old Philomathians.

- In Australia, the most famous version of the song is used by the South Sydney Rugby League club – "Glory Glory to South Sydney". The song mentions all the teams in the competition when the song was written, and says what Souths did to them when they played. Each verse ends with, "They wear the Red and Green".

- Len Chandler sang a song called "Move on Over" to this tune on Pete Seeger's *Rainbow Quest* TV show.[18]

- The British band Half Man Half Biscuit used the melody for their song "Vatican Broadside". [*citation needed*]

- "Kalle-Kustaan muori makaa hiljaa haudassaan, ja yli haudan me marssimme näin" (Kalle-Kustaa's hag lies silently in her grave, and we're marching over the grave like this) is a popular derivative song labouring the same tune sung often by the Finnish military when marching on foot.[*citation needed*]

- A modified version of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" was also used in the film *American History X* as Seth Ryan, played by Ethan Suplee, was driving his van and singing along to the lyrics while it was playing on the radio.[19] Similarly, *Oh! What a Lovely War* has a scene in which some soldiers make up their own lyrics.

- Various parodies have been written using the song. "The Burning of the School" is a well-known one. A somewhat more mature parody is "The Ballad of Harry Lewis", by Allan Sherman. Melanie Safka's song Psychotherapy also uses the tune. In Poland, the tune is known with Polish lyrics based on "John Brown's Body" version, rather than Julia Ward Howe's. Based on that version, a parody was sung in Poland in 1970s ridiculing Andrzej Czechowicz, a Polish spy styled by state propaganda as a national hero for infiltrating Radio Free Europe.

- "Queen's College Colours," written in 1898 by student Alfred Lavell to inspire the Queen's University football team to victory after a disappointing loss to the University of Toronto, is also set to the tune of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic".
- "Golya Golya" is a popular folk song in Felcsik in Transylvania (Romania).[*citation needed*]
- "Balay ko sa langit" ("My house in Heaven") is a popular children's song in one of the Visayan languages of the Philippines (possibly Cebuano).
- The progressive metal band Dream Theater uses a version of this song set to a minor key as a conclusion to their song "In the Name of God" from their album "Train of Thought"
- "Trois Milliards de Gens su Terre" ("Three Billion People on the Earth") is a loose adaptation of the Battle Hymn in the French language which uses its music, but possesses completely new lyrics written by Eddy Marnay that concern peace among the then 3 billion population of the earth. Noted French singer Mireille Mathieu has covered this song several times, starting in 1982. [20][21][22]
- "An American Trilogy" is a song arranged by country songwriter Mickey Newbury and made popular by Elvis Presley. It is a medley of three 19th century songs—"Dixie", a blackface minstrel song that became the unofficial anthem of the Confederacy since the Civil War; "All My Trials", originally a Bahamian lullaby, but closely related to African-American spirituals, and well-known through folk music revivalists; and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic", the marching song of the Union Army during the Civil War.
- Japanese electronics chain Yodobashi Camera uses the music in TV commercials and in-store.[23]
- American Christian Glam Metal band Stryper covered The Battle Hymn of The Republic on their Album *Soldiers Under Command*.

Media

See also

- William Weston Patton
- "Glory, Glory" (Georgia fight song)
- Blood on the Risers

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Further reading

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External links

Sheet music

- Free sheet music (http://cantorion.org/pieces/1918/Battle_Hymn_of_the_Republic) of The Battle Hymn of the Republic from *Cantorion.org*
- 1917 Sheet Music (http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/dynaweb/sheetmusic/1910-1920/@Generic__BookTextView/2155;nh=1?DwebQuery=a6037#X) at Duke University as part of the American Memory collection of the Library of Congress
- Sheet music (http://www.gutenberg.org/files/21566/21566-h/images/battlehymn.pdf) for The Battle Hymn of the Republic, from Project Gutenberg
- The Battle Hymn of the Republic. Facsimile of first draft (http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/richards/howe/battle.html)

Audio

- "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" (http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu/mp3s/7000/7867/cusb-cyl7867d.mp3), Stevenson & Stanley (Edison Amberol 79, 1908)—*Cylinder Preservation and Digitization Project (http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu/index.php)*.
- MIDI (http://www.gutenberg.org/files/21566/21566-h/music/battlehymn.midi) for The Battle Hymn of the Republic from Project Gutenberg
- The Battle Hymn of the Republic (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHVZK7nFYRQ) sung at Washington National Cathedral, mourning the September 11, 2001 attacks.
- The short film *A NATION SINGS (1963) (http://www.archive.org/details/gov.dod.dimoc.30155)* is available for free download at the Internet Archive [*more*]

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Categories: 1853 songs | 1862 in the United States | American folk songs | Joan Baez songs | American patriotic songs | Christian hymns | Songs of the American Civil War | Works originally published in The Atlantic (magazine) | South Sydney Rabbitohs

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