

Battle Hymn of the Republic

by Jack Hook / Anton Bosch



After reading this letter please "forward" it to your family and friends who you think might be interested. If you are a veteran of the military please respond and let me know when and where you served. <http://www.babylonthegreatisfalling.net>

Greetings,

Last year a dear Christian friend and fellow Vietnam veteran sent me a message containing an audio-visual rendition of The Battle Hymn of the Republic. Listening to the song was inspiring and to be honest, it choked me up a bit. The words reminded me of the days when Larry and I were young and served this nation as soldiers. It also reminded me of the days in America when evoking the name of the Lord and King, as was done in this song, was considered a noble thing by those who professed to be Christians. But was I being inspired by God's Spirit or by "another" spirit trying to seduce me with desires for a return to the so-called "good ole days" following the victorious close of World War II?

Some of you would say "what's wrong with thinking about and desiring to return to the good ole days, for our nation has become like Sodom and Gomorrah with women killing babies in their wombs and homosexuals getting married and joining the Marine Corps"? That's a great question which I have pondered and asked myself many times. As I understand things

from a Biblical viewpoint, there is nothing wrong with remembering things in our past. As a matter of fact, I think about events and experiences of my past more and more as I grow older. Many of my friends who are veterans of war seem to live in the past because of what they experienced. I find myself being the same way quite often.

What I am learning from my walk with the Lord is how to properly understand and remember those things in my past to gain knowledge and wisdom in the ways of God. And because of that, I now realize that desiring a return to those good ole days when America had at least a powerless form of Godliness is a "substitute" for the God-given desire to know Jesus Christ and walk with him now, and at his second coming. This is an example of how fallen angels plant desires in our minds by offering us things which appear good and right, yet if we accept the offer we are still far from knowing and walking with the Lord Jesus Christ. And let's be honest about the good ole days of post World War II. While everyone rejoiced in the downfall of Germany and Japan, wars in Korea and Vietnam proved to be extensions of World War II as the competition between Russia, China, and America and her Western European allies grew in intensity. And it is this competition now centered in Israel and Jerusalem that will usher in a nuclear World War III.

As I write this letter now I remember singing the Battle Hymn from our church hymnal, along with Onward Christian Soldiers, many times as I was growing up in the 1950's. I was taught this religious classic was written by Christians during the time of America's Civil War and never for a moment wondered why it was included in the church hymnals. The church my family attended back then included many World War II and Korean War veterans who cherished this song, moving some to tears as they remembered their friends who were killed or wounded in action. The entire congregation, including the pastor who was a combat veteran of World War II, were proud patriots who followed the "just war" doctrine of Augustine, Constantine, Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln; believing that the Lord was administering his justice and "terrible swift sword" through them just as the Union Army soldiers did who first sang this song written by Julia Ward Howe.

Like all Christians in America I was first taught that Jesus Christ loved me and wanted me to know that I needed to be saved. That was nice and felt good as I accepted this teaching, but like most other young Christians in the 50's and 60's I never asked what he wanted to save me from? And nobody explained or taught me the truth about the core elements or components of my sin nature that are common to every human being on this planet. When I entered the Army to fight the communists in Vietnam I had already been taught that American soldiers were to be proud of the fact they were fighting for "God and Country", a phrase and concept that is still in use today.

As I have written repeatedly over the years, it was a sad day in my life when I discovered from the Lord Jesus Christ in his scriptures that this militant pride I felt was coming from one of the core elements of my sin nature that he wanted to save me from. This proud attitude fit in well with other elements like my love of money, love of self, and love for this world system described in 1st John 2:16. The Lord convinced me that these things I was taught as a young Christian were keeping alive the very sin nature within me that he shed his blood to separate from me. Do you now see the dilemma that confronts all those who take the name of Jesus but remain willfully ignorant of the major components of their sin nature?

Below I have copied an article written by Anton Bosch, a pastor from South Africa. I do not know Anton personally, but what he has written has stirred my heart. Even though my understanding and support of the "just war" doctrine for Christians changed when I was born again and saved from my sin nature by our Lord Jesus Christ in 1978, I was not aware of the religious-political background of Mrs. Howe and the history of The Battle Hymn of the Republic.

What I have learned over the years as I studied the scriptures and history for myself is that American Christians misunderstand just how and when we will "make war" against the enemies of Christ, including the unrepentant baby killers and homosexuals who mock the holiness of God and his clear warnings against their lifestyle. Julia Ward Howe's song did not help the Union soldiers see the truth of prophecy concerning the second coming of Jesus Christ who will then make war against all of his enemies, Revelation 19. Resurrected and gloried Christians will be with him on that day of judgment and wrath, and until that day we are to love and offer God's forgiveness to all that reject the Lord Jesus, knowing that before we were saved we were also his enemies. The moving and heart-wrenching words found in The Battle Hymn of the Republic prove that Union soldiers failed to understand the prophetic words of Jesus. Mrs. Howe's song inspired Christians then and now to think of themselves and America's Republic as the battle-axe that would first bring God's freedom and peace to America, and then to the nations.

Their tragic error was thinking they could accomplish this noble cause without the bodily presence of the resurrected Jesus Christ when he comes to take over the nations, all of which follow the fallen angels in their rebellion against the Lord and his truth. American Christians could not see or understand that America was the Babylon of Revelation they were fighting and killing for, and not God's "terrible swift sword" to usher in the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. I know firsthand how hard it is to confess that the proud "God and Country" attitude ingrained in our young hearts and minds was planted by fallen angels who hate the true God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

As you now begin to read Anton's article which is not a thirty-second sound bite or a three-minute sermonette, remember this. The combined power of the precious blood and second coming of Jesus Christ is the "only" permanent solution to the death and destruction that men inflict upon one another to the hideous delight of Satan and his fallen angels, the masters of human manipulation. The triune God who created and loves you wants you to experience sorrow of a Godly kind that works repentance unto the salvation of your heart, mind, and body, 2 Corinthians 7:10. He will replace your genuine sorrow with his joy through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit surrounding your newly created and circumcised heart! Then you will desire to obey the God of Israel because you love him, knowing that he first loved you and sent his Son to save you from your sin nature and the bondage of the fallen angel masters.

The Battle Hymn of the Republic

By Pastor Anton Bosch

Introduction

In order to understand the meaning of any hymn, poem or piece of prose, one needs to look at the circumstances surrounding the writing of that work and the mindset of the author. One of the most famous hymns is *Amazing Grace*. The words of that hymn are very powerful, and, become more so when one understands the circumstances that led Newton to write those words. Newton's life, conversion and theology not only validate the hymn but add immensely to its meaning and value.

Another hymn that has been popular ever since it's creation in 1861, and is gaining popularity in the current political climate of the USA, is the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*. It is important to examine the circumstances under which this hymn was written, the meaning of the words, and the religious views of the author of this hymn in order to assess the value and validity of this hymn.

Personal Note

As a South African with a keen interest in music, I have often been exposed to the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*. I know most of the words and can hum the tune. But I have always seen it as a patriotic song which had little to do with Christianity, somewhat similar to South Africa's National Anthem: *Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika* – God bless Africa. Songs like this seemed to me to be long on sentiment and nationalism but very short on true Christianity, and certainly are not the type to be sung in Christian churches.

Well, imagine my shock when I came to America and found that the *Battle Hymn* was not only in our hymn book, but folks insisted on singing it as part of the worship! More than that, some would vigorously defend their right to sing it and would leave the church when denied that right.

Those experiences forced me to examine the hymn, its meaning and history, more closely. It is these conclusions I share with you in this article. I trust that my position as a pastor who is an outsider to American history and politics gives me some advantage of objectivity and neutrality.

John Brown's Body

The build-up to the American Civil War took several years. One of the men who had much to do with fomenting the Civil War was an abolitionist by the name of John Brown. In 1856, Brown led what would be known as the Pottawatomie Massacre in which he and his followers killed five pro-slavery southerners. Later, in 1859, he led an attack on a federal armory in order to secure arms which would be used to arm slaves in a rebellion. The attack failed, but seven more people were killed and several wounded. Brown was captured, found guilty of treason and hung. Opinions of Brown then and today are deeply divided, ranging from a hero to the father of American terrorism.

At about the time of the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, Union (Northern) soldiers began to sing a marching song known as *John Brown's Body* or *The John Brown Song*. The chorus was the same as the chorus of the *Battle Hymn* except for the last line, which reads "*his soul is marching on*" instead of "*His truth is marching on.*" The source of the words of the John Brown song are in dispute. The tune seems to have been a popular folk tune which was often used in camp meetings as a hold-all for many different words. Most of the lines of the chorus ("*Glory, glory, hallelujah*") and the melody seemed to remain constant while the rest of the words changed. *The John Brown Song* would soon become the foundation for the *Battle Hymn*.

Mrs. Julia Ward Howe

While the origins of the tune are obscure, and the author(s) of the words to *John Brown's Body* are in dispute, there is no uncertainty or dispute surrounding the authorship of the *Battle Hymn*. The words to the hymn were written by Mrs. Julia Ward Howe to the tune of *John Brown's Body*.

During the 1860s Mrs. Howe and her husband, Dr. Howe, a physician, lived in Massachusetts. Both were abolitionists and social activists. They rubbed shoulders with many of the influential people of the time and had visited Lincoln in the White House. The Howes hosted John Brown in their home and funded his activities. Dr. Howe and one of their pastors, Theodore Parker, were members of the "Secret Six" who funded Brown's activities (more about Parker below). At the time of Brown's arrest, Dr. Howe fled to Canada to escape prosecution, but later returned to become a member of the Sanitary Commission during the Civil War. Dr. Howe's work for the Union Army brought Mrs. Howe into personal contact with the Northern (Union) Army. This helped to shape the words of the *Hymn*.

The writing of the song

During a visit to the troops, Mrs. Howe was accompanied by, amongst others, her pastor, Mr. James Freeman Clarke, and his wife. Upon hearing the troops sing "*John Brown's body lies a-moldering in the grave,*" Clarke suggested to Howe that she should write new words to the tune. She replied that she had often wanted to, but had not found the right words. However, soon after, Mrs. Howe woke during the night with all the words in her mind. She arose and wrote them down in one sitting. (Except for a few refinements and the deletion of the last verse, the song remains substantially unchanged today.)

Mrs. Howe said that she went back to sleep "but not without feeling that something important had happened to me."^[ii] The following morning she could not remember any of the words, but they had been scribbled on a piece of Sanitary Commission notepaper. Howe's daughter noted that "the student of her life will note a number of sudden inspirations, or visions, as we may call them."^[iii] Both Howe and her daughter therefore suggested that the words came to her by some supernatural means, as she had in vain tried to write the words before, but this time they came by a flash of inspiration or vision. The source of this inspiration needs to be examined in the light of Howe's religious beliefs.

"In her *Recollections of the Anti-Slavery Struggle* she ascribes its composition to two causes - the religion of humanity and the passion of patriotism."^[iv] Thus by her own confession, the song was not a "spiritual" one rooted in Christianity, but rather it was rooted in the "religion of humanity."

What motivated the writing of the song?

As pointed out above, Dr. and Mrs. Howe were fiercely opposed to slavery and even funded militant abolitionists before the Civil War. They were therefore very much in support of the war, and even though Dr. Howe was too old to enlist he did what he could to support the war effort by serving on

the Sanitary Commission.

Mrs. Howe lamented the fact that she could not make a greater contribution towards the war effort. In her own words:

"I distinctly remember that a feeling of discouragement came over me as I drew near the city of Washington at the time already mentioned. I thought of the women of my acquaintance whose sons or husbands were fighting our great battle; the women themselves serving in the hospitals, or busying themselves with the work of the Sanitary Commission. My husband, as already said, was beyond the age of military service, my eldest son but a stripling; my youngest was a child of not more than two years. I could not leave my nursery to follow the march of our armies, neither had I the practical deftness which the preparing and packing of sanitary stores demanded. Some thing seemed to say to me, 'You would be glad to serve, but you cannot help any one; you have nothing to give, and there is nothing for you to do.' Yet, because of my sincere desire, a word was given me to say, which did strengthen the hearts of those who fought in the field and of those who languished in the prison."^[v]

(The "word" given her "to say" refers to the *Battle Hymn*).

Mrs. Howe's religion

We have already met Howe's pastor at the time of writing the song. He was Mr. Clarke. Not only was he the Howe's pastor "for many years," but he and his wife were close friends of the Howes and often accompanied Mrs. Howe on her visits to the troops.

According to Howe's daughter, another house friend was Theodore Parker, preacher and reformer. He, too, was more than a friend. Mrs Howe was a member of his church for "some time."^[vi]

During Mrs. Howe's visits to Washington, she would attend the church of the Rev. William Henry Channing whom she greatly admired.^[vii]

Who then were Clarke, Parker and Channing, what denomination did they belong to, and what did these men and Mrs Howe believe? Clarke, Parker and Channing were all Unitarian pastors, and were also all members of the Transcendental Club.^[viii] In addition, they were all disciples of Ralph Waldo Emerson.^[ix] (Channing was also the chaplain to the United States House of Representatives during 1863 and 1864). Not only were they all Unitarians, but they were on the extreme left of already liberal Unitarianism. It is very clear from Mrs. Howe's writings, as well as of those close to her, that she had no difference of opinion with these men, and that she admired and followed them, and that her own belief system was shaped by theirs. Since they all shared a common theology which has been well documented, we shall examine them as a group in order to determine Mrs Howe's religion.

What Howe believed

The following brief summary is a composition of some of the distinctives of 19th Century Unitarianism. Note that the majority of the citations are from a book written by Howe's close friend, pastor and associate - James Freeman Clarke.

- Jesus Christ is not God, but just a very good man.^[xi]
- They did not believe that Jesus was born of a virgin.^[xii]
- Since miracles cannot be explained by reason, they are rejected.^[xiii]
- For the same reason, they did not accept that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.^[xiv]
- Christ did not make atonement for our sins on the cross. Salvation is by "character."^[xv] Basically, all are saved, but need to be "improved" through the process of life.
- They do not believe that Jesus Christ will physically return the second time.^[xvi]

- The Bible is not the infallible, inspired Word of God but is equal to the “Vedas of India, or the Koran, or the Dialogues of Plato, or Wordsworth’s Ode to Immortality.”^[xvii]

It becomes exceedingly clear, then, that Mrs. Howe was by no means a Christian in the evangelical or orthodox sense. Her rejection of ALL the essentials of Christian doctrine make her no different than a Hindu, Moslem, or some other religious pagan. She was religious and knew a lot of verses from the Bible, but she was NOT a Christian in any orthodox sense. Not only were Mrs. Howe and her friends not Christians, they were anti-Christ by their rejection of all that Jesus Christ is and did.

This is cardinal to our understanding of the song. It’s “inspiration” therefore cannot be ascribed to the Holy Spirit, nor can its theology be given any credence. We could stop right here and assert that the song should be rejected outright as a worldly song simply on the basis that the author was not a Christian. I am not passing judgment as to whether Christians should sing this song outside of the church – just as they sing the National Anthem or other patriotic songs. That is a matter of personal conscience. But that this song should be banished from Christian worship is patently obvious. Simply because this song has “hymn” in its title does not make it a Christian hymn. This conclusion is reinforced when examining the words of the song.

The Apostle Paul says: *“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:8). Julia Ward Howe believed and preached another gospel, yet we allow her to continue to preach in our churches through this song. Instead of agreeing with Paul that she is accursed, we call her blessed! May the Lord have mercy on us for such disobedience and flagrant honoring a heretic and anti-Christ.

The Lyrics

Verse 1

*“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.”*

Howe described with pride how she saw the coming of the Lord in the Union Army in those bleak months of 1861: “When the war broke out, the passion of patriotism lent its color to the religion of humanity in my own mind... and a moment came when I could say: Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!”^[xviii]

Howe’s view that the Civil War was the coming of the Lord accords with the view held by her pastor, Mr. Clarke, who did not believe that Jesus will return bodily as He ascended (Acts 1:11). Rather he believed that Jesus comes mystically and in many ways. Clarke said:

“Christ also comes in the great events of history, which contribute to the progress of the human race... When Jerusalem was compassed with armies, and terrible bloodshed and awful suffering fell on the nation... that was a coming of Christ. For out of the midst of those horrors, came a new and better day.”^[xix]

Clarke then continued to explain his belief that the Civil War was also a “coming of the Christ” as it brought about the end of slavery.^[xx]

In the same year that Howe wrote the *Battle Hymn*, Rev. William Weston Patton also wrote new words to the *John Brown’s Body* tune. In his version, Patton confirmed the prevailing view that the Union Army was “Christ.” He further made John Brown out to be John the Baptist!

*“John Brown was John the Baptist of the Christ we are to see,
Christ who of the bondmen shall the Liberator be,*

*And soon thruout the Sunny South the slaves shall all be free,
For his soul is marching on.*"^[xxi]

This is nothing short of blasphemy – to suggest that the American Civil War, and the Northern Army in particular, is the coming of the Lord! These words should never have passed the lips of any Christian, let alone be sung in any assembly of God's people.

The rest of the verse continues to misquote Revelation 19:15, which states: *"Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."* The Apostle John here is speaking about Jesus Christ who returns to vanquish His enemies and set up His Kingdom at the end of the age. Once again, it is pure blasphemy to equate a human army on earth with the *"King of King and Lord of Lords"* (Revelation 19:16).

The last line of the first verse is repeated at the end of the Chorus: *"His truth is marching on."* God's Truth is spread through one way, and one way only: the preaching and teaching of His Word. God's truth does not march in rank and file. God's Word is not forced upon others at the end of the sword. God's truth does not kill brothers, cousins and uncles, as happened in the Civil War.

This song Battle Hymn does not promote God's truth, but rather promotes murder, hate and violence. Constantine, the Crusaders, the Roman Church, and many others throughout church history all thought they could promote God's truth by the shedding of blood. And many during the Civil War thought they could do the same. There is simply no sanction for this in the Bible.

Jesus taught us to love our enemies and to turn the other cheek. When pushed to defend Himself He responded: *"My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here"* (John 18:36). This teaching is the opposite of taking up arms against one's physical and/or spiritual brother, even if the purported purpose is to oppose a grievous error like slavery.

Verse 2

*"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."*

Julia Ward Howe told how she noticed, on her first visit to Washington, D.C., at the outbreak of the war, groups of soldiers at their fires surrounding the Capital.^[xxii] They had built a "steel girdle" around Washington because the Confederate (Southern) Army was close.

Once again she equated the Union Army with the Lord (*"I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps"*). Again, this is extreme blasphemy. God is not manifest in any army, let alone one fighting a civil war! If this were true then we would be going door-to-door forcing people to believe the Gospel at the end of a gun, and calling that "the Lord and His truth marching on." This can never be!

Howe then changed the metaphor so that the fires of the soldiers become altars through which they worship God! These "altars" are certainly not built to worship the True God. They must therefore be in honor of another deity, a fact which makes this a violation of the first command – *"you shall have no other gods before Me."*

The phrase *"I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps"* speaks of the judgment

(sentence) God had supposedly passed on the South, and that He was about to execute that sentence. This also is blasphemous. Taking up arms against one's brother can never be regarded as "righteous," and to suggest that the North was "God" executing judgment against the South is nothing less than sacrilege. To suggest that political leaders have a religious authority to pass the death sentence on any part of the nation because they believe differently, even if what they believe is wrong, is the height of arrogance and wickedness.

Verse 3

This verse is not included in many hymn books, yet is part of the song and is vital to an understanding of the meaning of the song.

*"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.'"*

The "*burnished rows of steel*" refers to the sun reflecting off the gun barrels and the fixed bayonets of the army.^[xxiii] The Gospel is never written in guns and bayonets and the implements of war. The Gospel of salvation is written in the hearts of those who have believed the message of Jesus Christ and been transformed by the power of that Gospel.

"Contemners" is an old English word which means those who treat one with contempt. This line says that to the degree that we kill those who despise God, God will extend grace to us! The Bible never links God's grace to killing those who disagree with us. This bloody kind of hate-mongering is absolutely not part of the Christian message. In fact, the opposite is true. If we willfully disobey God's Word by killing those with whom we have disagreements, there is not likely much grace for such willful sin. "*Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*" (Romans 6:1-2).

"Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel" is a misquoted reference to Genesis 3:15: "*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.*"^[xxiv] Once again, Howe turned the Union Army into "Christ" and the Confederate Army into "Satan." This is an outright heresy and a total abuse of the Scriptures, which Howe used to support her own political agenda. At the time of the war, there were just as many true Christians in the South as in the North, yet the one reserved the moral high ground to call itself "Christ" and the other "Satan." This is not remotely Christian. It is just plain worldly and a pagan way of thinking.

Verse 4

*"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."*

The trumpet probably refers to the references in Revelation to the trumpet. The army used bugles to either sound the "retreat" or the "charge," and Howe seemed to use poetic license to make this connection. The Last Trumpet heralds the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. "*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*"^[xxv] Once again, Howe replaced "Christ" with the Army.

Sifting out the hearts of men can only mean that they judge the motives of men's hearts. Thus Howe once again deified the Army and, worse, gives to the military the divine task of judging men's motives

and condemning them to death if they don't pass the test (sifting). How blasphemous! God alone is the judge and He has committed all judgment to His Son (John 5:22). Paul is very clear on our not judging men's hearts: *"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts"* (1Corinthians 4:5). But this does not present a problem to Howe since she believed that the Army is Christ!

Verse 5

*"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."*

"In the beauty of the lilies..." is sweet sentimentality that is void of any doctrinal support, but helps to make this bloody promotion of "truth" by killing your brother sound very nice. Jesus was not born in the beauty of the lilies; He was born in a stable and laid in a feed trough. But Howe had no problem twisting Scripture to suit her purpose.

The second line of this stanza is equally trite and void of Biblical support. Nowhere does the Bible speak of a *"glory in His bosom,"* and since she has clearly identified the Army as Christ, somehow she believes that the military will change us. War does indeed change people, but it is never in a good way.

The first part of the third line belies her own theology as she did not believe that Jesus' death saves us or sanctifies us. But, as we have seen, she did not hesitate to use words without concern for their meaning, as long as they would have the desired effect. I can only assume that she felt that throwing this reference to Christ's atoning sacrifice would fool Christians to believe that the song was Christian. She succeeded, and continues to succeed, in fooling the vast majority of non-discerning Christians. The presence of this line is vital to the deception. In the eyes of many, reference to Our Lord's atoning work "sanctifies" the whole song.

The call for us to *"die to make men free"* is obviously a call to die in battle in order to liberate the slaves and pays respect to John Brown. While this sentiment may have value in the world, it has no support from Scripture. *"We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."*^[xxvi]

Conclusion

The lyrics of the song are exactly what could be expected from a heretic and unbeliever. It promotes another gospel – the gospel of bloodshed, hatred and fratricide. Yet Christians, churches and their leaders promote this heresy in their churches.

"Oh, it is just a nice song and does not change our faith" I hear some say. That is exactly the deception. It does, and has, changed what many modern Christians (especially in America) believe. It is songs like this, and the theology behind it, that has resulted in a certain militancy amongst Christians. As a result many believe that they can, and must, promote their values by any means. "The end justifies the means and as long as we stand for truth, we can use any means to promote that truth." No, the method is just as important as the truth. Illegitimate means to achieve a "good" end does not sanctify the means. It remains sin, and God will never bless anything that is sin or contrary to His Word!

My prayer is not only that this article will help towards the banishing of this song from true churches,

but that it will also awaken Christians to carefully examine the theology of those national figures (of all nations) that we so easily worship and emulate.

“Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. “And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. “Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. “I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works” (Revelation 2:20-23)

Endnotes:

i. Mrs. Howe was relatively insignificant before the Battle Hymn was published. She moved in influential circles, partly due to the socialite status her inheritance had brought her and partly due to her husband’s standing. However, the writing of the song made her an instant celebrity and one of the most famous women in 19th century America. By 1876 she was well established as a preacher, reformer, writer and poet, at a time when women were not generally accepted in these roles.

Her main focus after the war was woman’s rights and she is credited as the creator of “Mother’s Day.” Some have dubbed her “the Queen of America.” (<http://www.juliawardhowe.org/bio.htm>)

ii. Florence Howe Hall, *The Story of the Battle Hymn of the Republic* (Harper, 1916), 52.

iii. *Ibid.*, 47.

iv. *Ibid.*, 48.

v. Julia Ward Howe, *Reminiscences, 1819-1899* (Houghton, Mifflin and company, 1899), 273-274.

vi. Hall, *The Story of the Battle Hymn of the Republic*, 32-33.

vii. Howe, *Reminiscences, 1819-1899*, 270.

viii. The Transcendental Club was a group of New England “intellectuals” who “may be defined in a somewhat wider perspective as children of the Puritan past who, having been emancipated by Unitarianism from New England’s original Calvinism, found a new religious expression in forms derived from romantic literature and from the philosophical idealism of Germany” (Perry Miller, “The American Transcendentalists,” <http://www.westminster.edu/staff/brennie/wisdoms/transcen.htm>). In plain English, while the Unitarians had rejected all the fundamentals of orthodox Christianity, this group went even further and sought for truth in places other than the Scriptures.

ix. Emerson started as a Unitarian but later rejected Unitarianism and was rejected by them as a heretic, not because he had moved towards Truth, but because he had moved even further from Truth than the Unitarians were prepared to do. Basically, Emerson was a pantheist, meaning that he did not believe in a personal God, but that god is present in all of nature and, as such, man was basically god. In spite of this, he is still regarded as one of the greatest American minds and his writings are prescribed reading in most American schools. The following blog gives a good brief overview of some of Emerson’s views:

<http://protheism.blogspot.com/2006/01/ralph-waldo-emerson-a-celebrated.html>

x. Ephraim Emerton, *Unitarian Thought* (Macmillan, 1911), 148.

- xi. James Freeman Clarke, *Vexed Questions in Theology: A Series of Essays* (G. H. Ellis, 1886), 90-111.
- xii. Emerson, *Unitarian Thought*, 50ff.
- xiii. *Ibid.*, 40.
- xiv. *Ibid.*, 54.
- xv. Clarke, *Vexed Questions in Theology*, 14, 149.
- xvi. *Ibid.*, 42, 63.
- xvii. *Ibid.*, 145.
- xviii. Hall, *The Story of the Battle Hymn of the Republic*, 49. Quoting Julia Ward Howe, *Recollections of the Anti-Slavery Struggle*.
- xvix. Clarke, *Vexed Questions in Theology*, 165-166.
- xx. *Ibid.*, 167.
- xxi. "Rev. William W. Patton," <http://www.preteristarchive.com/StudyArchive/p/patton-william.html>.
- xxii. Hall, *The Story of the Battle Hymn of the Republic*, 42.
- xxiii. *Ibid.*, 55.
- xxiv. This prophecy refers to Satan "bruising" Jesus at the cross, but Jesus will "crush his head" – defeat Satan at the cross (Colossians 2:15).
- xxv. 1 Thessalonians 4:16.
- xxvi. Ephesians 6:12
http://www.clarion-journal.com/clarion_journal_of_spirit/2011/01/battle-hymn-of-the-republic-by-jack-hook-anton-bosch.html