

WHAT SO ★ PROUDLY ★ WE HAIL

The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song

My Country 'Tis of Thee

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Until it was officially replaced by “The Star Spangled-Banner” in 1931, “My Country, 'Tis of Thee” served as our de facto national anthem. It was written in 1831 by Samuel Francis Smith (1808–1895), Baptist minister, journalist, and author. Though it is set to the music of Britain’s national anthem, Smith came to it by way of a German song. Also known as “America,” this song was first performed in public on July 4, 1831, at a children’s Independence Day celebration at Park Street Church in Boston.

What is it about “My Country” that the song primarily celebrates? Several verses explicitly refer to the Divine: for what reasons and for what purposes? Several verses speak about education and school: what role do they play in the nation’s story? What, according to the song, do we owe to our ancestors? To what—ancestors, or schools, or God, or something else—are we indebted for “Sweet Freedom”? How does singing this song make you feel?

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet Land of Liberty
Of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
From every mountain side
Let Freedom ring!

Let music swell the breeze,
And ring from all the trees
Sweet Freedom's song;
Let mortal tongues awake;
Let all that breathe partake;
Let rocks their silence break,
The sound prolong.

My native country, thee,
Land of the noble free,
Thy name I love;
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills;
My heart with rapture thrills,
Like that above.

Our fathers' God, to Thee,
Author of Liberty,
To Thee we sing.
Long may our land be bright
With Freedom's holy light;
Protect us by Thy might
Great God, our King.

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To Thee we sing.
Long may our land be bright
With Freedom's holy light;
Protect us by Thy might
Great God, our King.

*(Additional verses later added by the
American educator and clergyman
Henry van Dyke.)*

We love thine inland seas,
Thy groves and giant trees,
Thy rolling plains;
Thy rivers' mighty sweep,
Thy mystic canyons deep,
Thy mountains wild and steep,--
All thy domains.

My country, 'tis of thee,
Stronghold of slavery, of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Where men man's rights deride,
From every mountainside thy deeds shall
ring!

*(These verses were added in 1843 by the
abolitionist A.G. Duncan.)*

My native country, thee
Where all men are born free,
if white's their skin;
I love thy hills and dales,
Thy mounts and pleasant vales;
But hate thy negro sales, as foulest sin.

Let wailing swell the breeze,
And ring from all the trees
the black man's wrong;
Let every tongue awake;
Let bond and free partake;
Let rocks their silence break, the sound
prolong.

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Our father's God! to thee,
Author of Liberty, to thee we sing;
Soon may our land be bright,
With holy freedom's right,
Protect us by thy might, Great God, our
King.

It comes, the joyful day,
When tyranny's proud sway,
stern as the grave,
Shall to the ground be hurl'd,
And freedom's flag, unfurl'd,
Shall wave throughout the world, O'er
every slave.

Trump of glad jubilee!
Echo o'er land and sea freedom for all.
Let the glad tidings fly,
And every tribe reply,
"Glory to God on high,"
at Slavery's fall.