



## God Save the South George H. Miles (1861)

*“God Save the South” was a popular Confederate war song; one southern publisher marketed it during the Civil War as “our national Confederate anthem.” The lyrics were composed by white Marylander George Miles, writing under the pen name Earnest Halphin. Miles was from a family of Unitarians turned Catholics. At the time he wrote “God Save the South,” he was teaching literature at a Catholic college in Maryland—a state that did not secede to join the Confederacy (which likely explains why Miles used a pen name for this song). Due to its popularity, Miles’s song stands as an example of Confederate civil religion. Note how the song lays claim to the legacy of George Washington and blames the Civil War on those who “fetter the free man to ransom the slave.”*

God save the South, God save the South,  
her altars and firesides, God save the South—  
now that the war is nigh, now that we arm to die,  
chanting our battle cry, “Freedom or death!”

God be our shield, at home or afield;  
stretch thine arm over us, strengthen and save.  
What though they’re three to one? Forward, each sire and son,  
strike till the war is won, strike to the grave!

God make the right stronger than might;  
millions would trample us down in their pride.  
Lay thou their legions low, roll back the ruthless foe,  
let the proud spoiler know God’s on our side.

Hark honor’s call, summoning all,  
summoning all of us unto the strife.  
Sons of the South, awake! Strike till the brand shall break;  
strike for dear honor’s sake, freedom, and life!

Rebels before, our fathers of yore;  
rebel’s the righteous name Washington bore.  
Why, then, be ours the same, the name that he snatched from shame,  
making it first in fame, foremost in war.

War to the hilt; theirs be the guilt  
who fetter the free man to ransom the slave.  
Up, then, and undismayed sheathe not the battle blade  
till the last foe is laid low in the grave!

God save the South, God save the South,  
dry the dim eyes that now follow our path.

Still let the light feet rove safe through the orange grove;  
still keep the land we love safe from thy wrath.

God save the South, God save the South,  
her altars and firesides, God save the South—  
for the great war is nigh, and we will win or die,  
chanting our battle cry, “Freedom or death!”

**Source:** Earnest Halpin, *God Save the South* (Baltimore, MD: Miller & Beacham, 1861), <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ihas.200002414.0>. Civil War Sheet Music Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress. The contents of the Library of Congress Civil War Sheet Music Collection are in the public domain and are free to use and reuse.

Edited by John-Charles Duffy. Line breaks reduced by half for a more compact presentation of the text. Capital letters at the beginning of lines converted to lowercase for readability. Elisions spelled out. An archaic spelling modernized (*chaunt* → *chant*). Punctuation emended to clarify syntax, and some sentence breaks adjusted. Italics in the source publication omitted. Inconsistent capitalization in the source regularized, with *South* being consistently capitalized here and divine pronouns consistently downcased. The word *honor*, also inconsistently capitalized in the source publication, is consistently lowercase here; *freedom* and *life* have been converted to lowercase to match.

This edited presentation of the song’s lyrics is intended for **teaching** purposes only. For **research** purposes, you should consult, quote, and cite the source publication listed above.



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