

The text for the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” first appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in February 1862. This poem was penned by Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910) -- a poet, public speaker, advocate for the abolition of slavery, and champion of women’s suffrage. Her text has become the rallying cry, not just for the Northern States in the American Civil War, but also for the inevitable universal victory of freedom over oppression, of righteousness over despotism, of Christ over Satan.

The music for the “Battle Hymn” is of unknown origin, although some sources list William Steffe as the composer. The melody had been used for a number of satirical and comic songs in the mid-1800s, but was also included in a camp-meeting hymn, “Oh brothers, will you meet us on Canaan’s happy shore?” Howe apparently heard a group of soldiers singing the melody with the words, “John Brown’s body lies a mouldering in the grave. . . . His soul goes marching on.” It was from this version that she set out to write a more uplifting anthem.

President Abraham Lincoln’s *Gettysburg Address* is perhaps the most eloquent, yet short, speech ever given by a national leader. It was delivered at a memorial service on November 19, 1863, after the battle of Gettysburg. Within its three paragraphs can be found a profound statement honoring those who have given their lives in the defense of freedom, along with a solid faith that this nation, under God, shall not perish if it remains committed to its original noble and consecrated cause.

The origin of the meditative bugle call, “Taps,” is somewhat obscure. There are several versions of its creation, the most reliable of which traces it to a Union commander, General Daniel Adams Butterfield, in 1862. “Taps” has become the signal that the struggles of the day have ended, almost a musical prayer at the close of each day. It has also earned its place as part of military funerals, honoring the dead and pronouncing a release from their earthly struggles. Many military funerals today include an “echo” version of “Taps,” with one trumpet playing close to the audience and another “echoing” from the distance. This arrangement includes this antiphonal echo effect.

It is both natural and fitting that these three patriotic expressions -- all from the American Civil War -- be combined into one glorious musical setting, honoring patriotic sacrifices, reaffirming faith in God, and looking forward to the Second Coming of the Savior.