



A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED BY THE

Rev. T. H. Barr,

AT CANAAN CENTER,



APRIL 19, 1865,

On the occasion of the Funeral Obsequies of our late
President, Abraham Lincoln.

PUBLISHED BY SPECIAL REQUEST.



REPUBLICAN STEAM POWER PRESS, WOOSTER, OHIO.
1865.



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CORRESPONDENCE.

REV. T. H. BARR,

SIR:—Believing that the discourse delivered by you at Canaan Center, on the 19th inst., would, by its general circulation, have a beneficial influence, we respectfully request the same of you for publication.

ISAAC NOTESTINE.
J. H. WALLACE.
THOMAS KEENEY.
CALVIN ARMSTRONG.
JAS. A. MCCOY.
C. G. CRANE.
J. H. POLLOCK.
J. HOUGH.
WM. P. VAN DOORN.

MESSE^S. ISAAC NOTESTINE, J. H. WALLACE, THOMAS KEENEY,
CALVIN ARMSTRONG, JAS. A. MCCOY, C. G. CRANE, J. H.
POLLOCK, J. HOUGH AND WM. P. VAN DOORN,

GENTLEMEN:—I acknowledge with feelings of gratification your kind note of the 19th inst., and on reflection have concluded to defer to your, perhaps too partial, judgment, and submit the discourse to your disposal.

With highest regards, I remain truly yours,

T. H. BARR.

CANAAN, April, 1865.

A DISCOURSE,

BY THE

REV. T. H. BARR.

We ought to endeavor to rise in our conceptions to the greatness and solemnity of the occasion on which we have met. We are but a fragment of one vast assembly, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Lakes to the Gulf, which at this hour stand mourning in worship before God under a great national calamity. I know no more appropriate words in which to bring the occasion and object of this meeting before you than these, taken from the pathetic lament of David over the death of Abner, assassinated by the hand of Joab: "*Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen?*"

The mighty are fallen in the high places and an afflicted nation is bowed in mourning. ABRAHAM LINCOLN, President of the United States, is dead, cruelly, basely murdered by a wicked assassin, in the capital of the nation, in the midst of the rejoicings of a loyal people over the triumphs that God has given us through his instrumentality, in the high position to which the voice of a free nation had called him. We are invited by the highest authority in the land to meet at this time and manifest our sense of the nation's loss by appropriate religious exercises. It is no common occasion on which we are met. This is no common funeral. We have before been called as a nation to mourn the death of Chief Magistrates, snatched away while in the chair of office. The drapery of mourning has hung over the land for a Harrison and a Taylor. But great as was the loss occasioned by their death, and deeply as they were mourned, in the *cause*

and *manner* of their death there was no outrage done the nation's feelings—no indignity, no insult offered its honor and authority. Had our lamented President fallen by disease, or the common casualties to which human life is exposed, it would still become the nation to lie in the dust and mourn. That he should fall by the bloody hand of an assassin—the victim of a deep laid, desperate conspiracy against the life and majesty of the nation represented by him, calls for deeper humiliation and profounder sorrow.

Truly a great—and even by the confession of his enemies, a good man—has fallen in our high places. If he was not greater than thousands of others in natural talents and personal endowments, none can deny that he was great in official position and dignity; great in the responsibilities that rested on him, and the invaluable interests staked in him for the loyal millions of our own land, and for humanity. The murderous hand that struck him down, struck at the common rights and liberty of man. The assassin's bullet that was aimed at him was aimed at the authority, the honor and the life of the nation, and against the authority and majesty of God. In view of the bloody tragedy thus enacted in the face of the nation, let all partizan feelings be laid aside. Let all feel and speak and act as the enormity of the crime demands; as having a common interest in the perpetuity and honor of the nation, a common duty in maintaining law and order, and upholding the principles of morality and religion.

My convictions of truth, based on numerous and impartial evidences, constrain me to say that our beloved and lamented President was no common man in natural ability and attainment in the qualities that constitute the true statesman. The gold may have been encrusted with some quartz, but it was the pure metal. The diamond may not have been so nicely cut or so finely polished as it might have been, but it was a gem of the first water. He was liable to err because he was merely a man, but his mistakes were few and unimportant compared with his many acts of wise, far-reaching and beneficent statesmanship. His action and course on one single matter—the complicated and beyond doubt the bitter root of all our troubles, Slavery—which he was led to take after much hesitancy and travel of soul, will entitle him to rank among the first of statesmen.

He was called, in the Providence of God, to no common task of statesmanship, in a time of no common confusion and peril. Few men, if any, in the world's history, have been called to the kingdom at such a time as he was. He was placed at the helm when the ship of State, either through weakness or treachery, was drifting among rocks and hidden shoals, tost and wrenched in every joint by the raging waves of party and opposing currents of conflicting interests. Most on board were confounded and paralyzed by fear, and the rest were treacherous or in open mutiny. Our hereditary enemies and the minions of Monarchy were already exulting that the vessel, freighted with the world's last hope of liberty and Republican government was water-logged and foundering, and gave their moral, and as far as they dared their material, influence to make sure what they so eagerly desired and hoped for. Thank God! their exultation and efforts were equally vain. We can even now see that it was to test and manifest the strength of the ship and its ability to weather through a tempest that would have shattered and sunk the proudest government of the old world. It was to make it necessary to throw overboard some lading that ought not to have been there, and which might one day have sunk her, even in an open and a calm sea.

To succeed in righting the ship in such condition—piloting it safely through the shoals and rocks to an open sea—restoring order and subordination on board—renewing rigging and sails and spreading them to a fair wind, and starting her again rejoicing on her course, is what no mere demagogue could do, and what God never called a weak and incompetent man to do. An exception might seem to lie where a people had filled up their cup of iniquity and God designed to destroy them. But even then his more ordinary method of procedure is “to destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothingness the understanding of the prudent.” Yet, under God, ABRAHAM LINCOLN, with those whom he selected to act with and under him, has brought this nation through the most fearful struggle for life that ever a nation was called to pass through, and restored us to peace unshattered, or so nearly restored us as to thrill with joyful hope the heart of every loyal man and woman, and even make glad thousands that are not. This makes good his title to take rank among the wise and great.

As a Christian and a Calvinist, I must come to the same conclusion. God governs the world, and he governs it by wisely selecting and using suitable agents and instruments. He does not raise up and place at the head of victorious armies men weak in head and heart. Neither does he call imbeciles or poltroons to save a sinking nation or found an empire. He selects or fits the instrument for the work—the agent for the task. When I look at the task this man was called of God to do, and how nearly he accomplished and how well he did his part, I feel that it would be impeaching the wisdom of the Supreme Ruler to deny that the man he chose for the work was an eminently wise and competent statesman. Great men, however, may be bad men. Eminent statesmen have sometimes been eminently wicked. But it was not so with the statesman whom the nations mourn to-day. He was eminent for goodness and kindness of heart. His very faults, so far as he erred in his public duties, had their origin in these traits. If, through their own professions of loyalty, or the solicitations of their friends, he placed traitors in heart to posts of important trusts, it was because he was so honest himself. If he failed to deal with sufficient sternness with the rebels and their abettors, it was because his nature was so kind and forgiving. He was to a proverb what one of the English classics calls the crowning work of God—“An honest man.” Such not merely in the judgment of partial friends and interested partizans, but such in the judgment of the disinterested and impartial, and by the confessions of his enemies in both sections of our land and beyond the Sea. I think it within the bounds of sober truth to say that the like accumulation and concurrence of evidence as to the possession of these qualities by our lamented President, never before entered into the person of any statesman. I will not insult the memory of the dead by adducing further proof of this. It will only be denied by the reckless portion or the incurably prejudiced.

For such a man the nation sits in mourning. The sun of his public career has indeed gone down at noon, but for him it sits in glory. The only gem wanting in his coronet of honor was martyrdom for his country and human liberty. His death supplied it.

Were it for me to propose the epitaph to be graven on the mar-

ble that shall point the stranger to his grave, I would say, let it be written without addition and without date, LINCOLN, THE HONEST STATESMAN. There never was and never will be but ONE LINCOLN, and the time and cause of his death any child will tell you while the nation exists. Such are my settled and honest convictions in regard to him whose funeral obsequies we celebrate. I am fallable and may be wrong, but with my present light I am willing to stand by them.

The tragical death of our Chief Magistrate is moving the heart of the nation as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind. It is right. The heart that is not moved thereby is stone—the heart that cherishes complacency or joy in view of it, is worse. It is right that the heart of the people should be moved, and it is important that this uprising of feeling should be rightly and intelligently directed, to right ends and in a right manner.

There are others to whom it belongs to set before the nation and the world the civil and political consequences of the sad event, and direct to the proper civil and political action in the case. I assume no such task. But when the judgment of God is thus upon the nation does it become the church of God to be silent and indifferent? Must the ministers of the Gospel be dumb? May they not point to the judgment and show the hand of God in it, and call upon men to consider it aright, why it was sent and what they ought to do morally and religiously in view of it? When the great deep of human feeling is heaving and surging, must the lips of Christ's ministers be sealed, and leave it entirely to politicians and men of the world to guide this tide of feeling and tell men in what light to look at things, how they ought to regulate their feelings, and what they ought to do, and how? Is the mind and will of God in these things not to be heard or regarded? Where is his mind and will to be looked for if not in his word? If ministers are not to explain, apply and enforce that word in all its bearings on the relations, interests and duties of men, what, I would ask, are they for?

On these points I cannot understand how Christian men can differ. As I understand the duty of a minister of the Gospel, it is wrong to pass such awful providences in silence and not call the attention of men to look at them in a moral and religious light. They have it in solemn charge not only to point out the

way of salvation to men, but to tell them how they ought to live and act; to inculcate the rules and principles of morality from the word of God; to hold up to the light, for abhorrence and condemnation, the crimes and wickedness of men, without respect of persons or station. With such convictions I would do what in me lies to have you view and feel aright in regard to this great wickedness that has been done in the land. If this deed of treachery and blood does not draw out the united, hearty and indignant condemnation of the moral and Christian people of this nation, we may well tremble for the safety and continuance of our heaven-given government, all our social and religious institutions, and we may prepare for confusion and every evil work. It is not enough that we shudder at and condemn the deed in our hearts. We are in duty bound to speak out, to let our abhorrence of it be known clearly, decidedly and unequivocally. To be neutral is to approve the crime. If you are a Christian you are one of God's called and commissioned witnesses. You are to bear testimony for God not only to the truth but against the violations of his law, against crime of every degree. And the more terrible and heaven-daring the wickedness, the more prompt, clear and decided ought your testimony to be. This is one of those clear cases in which good men ought to be found standing together on the same side, bearing the same testimony. We ought to have ourselves, and help others to have, right views of the nature and magnitude of the atrocious deed that to-day shrouds the nation in mourning.

It is no common deed of wickedness whether we consider its nature and circumstances or the designed consequences of it to the nation. It is not easy to grasp it in its full dimensions. We cannot readily take it in, in its full extent. It is one of those crimes that nations are shaken with only after the intervals of centuries, and in times of darkness and violence. In our country heretofore we have known and spoken of it as a thing of history. That it should be repeated in this stage of the world's advancement in Christian knowledge and civilization, of natural refinement and respect for government and law, that it should take place on such a theatre, under such a government, at such a time, when we are on trial before the world as to the fact whether a free and intelligent people can govern themselves,

these things, and others like them, stamp it a crime of the greatest enormity—THE CRIME OF THE AGE. No nation on the face of the earth could less afford to have it perpetrated in their midst, when we look at the principles of our government and the emergencies that are upon us. It is not simply that we have been deprived of an able and faithful ruler. That has often happened to other nations, has often happened to ourselves, is happening constantly, because the wise and good cannot live forever. It is the reason WHY it was done, and the unmitigated baseness of the manner of it, that should startle and arouse every American citizen. It was done in violation and contempt of and with the design to overthrow and destroy the fundamental principles upon which our government rests—the right of the people to govern themselves, to choose their own rulers and make their own laws, and that the will of the majority, constitutionally expressed, is the LAW. Our murdered President died a martyr to these principles. If we palliate or justify his assassination, we abandon and renounce these principles which as a nation we have gloried in, and to purchase and maintain which rivers of blood have flowed and thousands of precious lives have been sacrificed. I solemnly believe this to be true, spite of the contradictions of sophistry and prejudice, and therefore call on you to denounce this atrocious deed.

The crime is aggravated by the interests of the millions represented by the Chief Magistrate who has been murdered. It was not the man ABRAHAM LINCOLN alone that was struck by the assassin's bullet. It was aimed at the millions of law-abiding and loyal citizens of this great nation. This flows not only nor mainly from the theory of our government, but is the clear teachings of the Bible. Legitimate rulers represent and stand as it were in the place of the people governed. Hence the people are punished for the sins of the rulers, and the rulers for the sins of the people. The lives, the honor, the material interests of every good citizen, so far as government can go, was vested in, held in trust and represented by our lamented President as the head of the nation. It was because he held that position that he was marked for death. Had the power been equal to the design and uncontrolled tendency of the act, all the vested interests of the American people as loyal citizens would have fallen with him.

That they did not is due to the want of power and not to the want of will. God takes the will for the deed, and will judge men accordingly.

We have not brought to your attention circumstances attending the mournful event of a personal and private nature. These are no more than has been in thousands of other cases, and perhaps less aggravating and affecting. It is not these things that make it national indignity and injury, and call for national indignation and mourning.

There is still another thought demanding our serious attention. In permitting the nation to be deprived of her highest civil ruler, God has spoken to this people in trumpet tones. What does it mean? What does it portend? We cannot read the secret counsels of Heaven, or presume to determine whether he designs to overrule it for mercy or for wrath to the nation. He can do either. "He can make the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder he can restrain." But although we cannot tell what results are to follow these things, there are some obvious duties to which this nation, and especially the Christian portion of it, are called by the event :

1. To acknowledge the hand of God in it. We are to own his agency in what he permits, as well as in what he does. If God had not permitted it, it could not have taken place. "He doth according to his pleasure in the armies of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." He permitted it as he permitted the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar, the proud ambitious king of Babylon ; as he permitted the betrayal of Christ by Judas, and his crucifixion by the scribes and elders.

2. We are called to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and to confess yet again our sins. We have been called to this duty, during the past four years, both by the voice of Providence and the call of him who will no more call the nation to acknowledge the hand of God in sorrow or in joy ; under reverses or in the midst of victories. In public and official documents, by the highest authorities of the nation, this has been repeatedly done. The people have responded to these calls with promptness and apparent fervor. It would argue too great a want of charity to set all this down as a mere outward form—hypo-

critical mockery. That there has been much sincere humiliation and acknowledgment of our national sins before God by thousands in our land and by a goodly number in the highest positions civil and military, cannot be more reasonably doubted than we can doubt that God has a church in the land. It would be equally faithless and ungrateful to think and say that it has all been in vain. We have had, many times, reason to say with Israel, "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick when their wrath was kindled against us." And it was while the nation was singing "The Lord has done great thing for us whereof we are glad," that the shadow of this great calamity has fallen upon us. Still we should turn to God, confess our sins and seek forgiveness and help from him. He has been our nation's help in ages past. and he may be so for years to come. Let us then adopt the language of the Psalmist, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disgusted within me? Hope thou in God for I shall yet praise him, for he is the help of my countenance, and my God." He may lay calamities upon us, and cause men to go over us shod, yet surely he will not utterly forsake us and give us over to destruction. Let us then say, in the confidence of humble faith and hope, with the church of old, "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

