

E

457
.8
H67



HITCHCOCK

Lincoln





Class E 411

Book 18

H 27

511

GOD ACKNOWLEDGED, IN THE NATION'S BEREAVEMENT.

A SERMON

DELIVERED IN HUDSON, OHIO,

ON THE DAY OF THE OBSEQUIES OF

426
946
ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

APRIL 19th, 1865,

BY

HENRY L. HITCHCOCK.

20 CLEVELAND:

FAIRBANKS, BENEDICT & CO., PRINTERS, HERALD OFFICE,
1865.

GOD ACKNOWLEDGED, IN THE NATION'S BEREAVEMENT.

A SERMON

DELIVERED IN HUDSON, OHIO,

ON THE DAY OF THE OBSEQUIES OF

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

APRIL 19th, 1865,

BY

HENRY L. HITCHCOCK.



CLEVELAND :

FAIRBANKS, BENEDICT & CO., PRINTERS, HERALD OFFICE,
1865.

Hudson, April 20th, 1865.

REV H. L. HITCHCOCK, D. D.

Dear Sir:—Your Sermon on the lamented death of our venerated President, Abraham Lincoln, preached on the 19th inst. in conformity with the recommendation of the government at Washington, was listened to with deep interest by a numerous congregation.

Desiring to perpetuate, as far as may be, the memory of the day and the occasion, and impressed with the truth and importance of the sentiments and principles embodied in your discourse, they unanimously, through us, solicit a copy for publication.

HARVEY BALDWIN, }
WM. M. BEEBE, } *Committee.*
N. P. SEYMOUR, }

Messrs. H. BALDWIN. W. M. BEEBE AND N. P. SEYMOUR, *Committee.*

Gentlemen:—To aid in perpetuating among us the memory of the day and the occasion, the request of the Congregation through you, is complied with, and a copy of the Sermon is at your disposal.

HENRY L. HITCHCOCK

Western Reserve College. April 21, 1865.

S E R M O N .

JOB 1: 21.

“The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

The nation was jubilant with joy. The steady march of its armies had been crowned with great and decisive victories.—The Capital of the enemy so long an object of fierce contest, had been occupied by our forces. His chief general had surrendered, with his chief army. There was hope that the favorable terms allowed might induce others to submission. Drafting and recruiting had ceased by order from the War Department. The day made memorable at the opening of the war by the fall of Sumter, was being made more memorable by the formal restoration of the flag of the Union with appropriate ceremonies, and by general rejoicing. Its exultant hours were drawing near their close, when their progress is arrested by a deed of the blackest crime. Assassination for the first time in our annals strikes at the government. The dark spirit of the rebellion, born of slavery, accomplishes its fell purpose, thwarted before. The venerated head of the Republic dies its victim. His chief Counselor is assailed with the same intent in his own house upon a bed of sickness, and members of his family likewise in their care for him and attempt to interfere with the murderer.

Exultation ceases. Horror takes its place. The following day is ushered in and passes with lamentation. The insignia of rejoicing are changed into the insignia of mourning. Heavy gloom and apprehension succeed festivity, and high wrought confidence. They spread from the center to the extremities, from city to city and State to State, till the whole land bows beneath the blow. The honest, the pure, the far seeing, the magnanimous Abraham Lincoln, the people's choice and people's friend, the firm yet merciful ruler, the successful guardian and guide of the Republic thus far in its severest trial, and just entered upon his second term of office, with continually increasing indications that his administration was rapidly tending to a most triumphant issue out of the great struggle for life and honor; he, the revered, trusted and beloved Chief Magistrate has been foully assassinated.

To-day has been designated for the funeral obsequies, and the Government has invited the people throughout the land to observe it with appropriate services. While the Presidential Mansion and the Capitol are the especial scene of these solemnities, the whole country takes part in them at this hour. The large Congregation assembled here on brief notice testifies our deep sympathy. Ours, but indicates the general sympathy. The nation is shrouded in mourning. Its illustrious dead will be borne to his grave with most profound regret, and his memory and name be cherished among the first in the hearts of his countrymen to all future time.

But his integrity and wisdom and fidelity can serve the people no more. Other minds must guide the Republic now. Its future is with them, under the higher control of the Supreme Ruler. To recognize that Ruler, to seek His support and blessing is our appropriate purpose now. He should be in all our thoughts, but should be especially regarded, when His Providence has come so near, and has so distinctly addressed us.— These events were by no means beyond His knowledge, by no means outside of His superintendence. They have meaning from Him. They bring lessons of truth and duty, of wisdom

and patriotism, of trust and hope. To Him should we draw near, and with Him hold communion. Human passions may thus be stilled ; human griefs assuaged ; consolation come to every mourner ; confidence return ; new hope dawn ; courage and strength be secured for the great emergency ; and the nation girded afresh, for its work, may arise and under the leadership of the Constitutional successor of the late President, with Him who is Sovereign over all, as its Supreme Leader, carry on that work to full completion. To guide our thoughts and prayers on the occasion, the text has seemed most suitable.

“The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

I. “The Lord gave.”—In addition to the general truth that He orders all events, most would be disposed to regard President Lincoln’s elevation to power and his preservation so long, as the especial gifts of divine favor. The conviction that he was the man for the times had been steadily increasing, until it was well nigh universal. Friends were firmer friends. The doubtful and hesitating were more confident and cordial. Enemies were becoming friends. Respect had taken the place of ridicule, and praises of jeers. Even foreign journals whose sympathies had been with his enemies, were beginning to find something in him to admire and commend.

Now, with any faith in the general providence of God, we can hardly fail to mark His good providence, in giving us such a President for the period of trial through which we have been passing. The confidence of many that it was indeed so, was awakened, when, on first leaving his western home to assume the duties of his office, he bade his friends and neighbors farewell in a brief address, and with evident sincerity asked a remembrance in their prayers at the throne of heavenly grace.—He then commended himself as a man of sagacity and alive to responsibility, devoted to duty and looking Heavenward for help. This confidence was increased by his preservation from intended assassination, and by his entrance upon his first term of service with an evident and firm purpose to fulfill its duties

with religious regard to his oath of office whatever the impending storm might bring. Events from time to time and his bearing with regard to them justified and augmented this confidence. He was above prejudice and passion. He manifested no selfish and narrow ambition. He was not elated by success, nor depressed by misfortune. He sought the right and was firm and persistent in doing it. His proclamation of freedom to the slave, its method and time, as well as nature and results, increased this confidence. His obvious recognition of God and devout reliance upon Him increased it. His triumphant re-election, and the results in furthering the National cause, his re-inauguration and address at the time ; and the successes which crowded the last weeks of his life, affording the highest occasion for gratitude and sufficient vindication of his administration, and hastening its triumph over all the manifold difficulties of his position, so that there was well nigh unanimous confidence reposed in him, leave little reason to question that his administration was the good gift of God, to a people whom He would save from anarchy and ruin. Recognizing God at all in providence, we shall feel constrained to bless His name, that in kindness He gave us the Chief Magistrate, who has been so mysteriously taken from us, and whose funeral services we attend to-day.

II. "The Lord hath taken away." More difficulty will naturally be felt in the application of this part of the text, to the event which has bereaved us. Was not the President taken away by the craft and crime of our enemies? Was it not by assassination, a deed of guilt in the sight of both God and man, against high heaven as well as the nation and all human law? Were we not foully robbed of him, whom we had learned to honor, love and trust? How had God aught to do with what both He and man condemn?

He had not directly, but certainly by permission. He did not prevent it, as might have been done by innumerable incidents ; as had been done more than once before, and by Him, if He gave us the President and preserved him so long. The

event was not beyond His supervision and control. It was embraced within His most wise and inscrutable counsels, His most holy and supreme government over men.

Then it should be remembered that His gift was not direct, but through the intervention of many and different instrumentalities. The President was the choice of the people, after a most exciting canvass in the midst of some of the most stirring events of the national history. Yet we properly recognize him as given by God. So, though in a different sense, do we properly regard his death, while caused by the murderer's hand, as appointed in the providence of God. It did not come a-thwart His designs. He purposed it, in such sense that we should recognize His presiding will and devoutly say "the Lord hath taken away."

But if He gave in mercy and for the welfare of the country, how should He permit His chosen servant to be taken away until the work was accomplished and the welfare of the country made secure? We cannot penetrate the secrets of His Sovereignty, we cannot grasp the reasons of His universal government. If known in this instance, they might appear sufficient. Certainly, in carrying out His purposes of good to a people, He is not restricted to a single agent or any number of agents. No great and good cause under His guidance can be so dependant upon the life of a single individual, that his death should involve its overthrow. There are different parts of every great enterprise, and different talents adapted to them. If our national cause has the approbation of God, as we do not question, the part assigned to our late President has been finished and *well* finished. Perhaps our loving hearts could not have selected a more fitting time for its conclusion.

It was amidst the general rejoicing over unprecedented successes, and the apparently dying struggles of the rebellion; when the administration might safely pass to other hands, and he, relieved of the burdens and perils which future events would bring, might ever stand before the country and the world, as he then appeared, the central figure in a great national de-

liverance; when his fame had reached its zenith, and by common consent his place among those who had served the country, was with the "Father of his country." We might wish that he could have lived to see complete triumph, and to enjoy the honor and reward of his most faithful services. But like Moses, he was permitted to see the goodly land in prospect, though not to enter it; and has been gathered to the company of the great and good, who having served God and their generation, rest from their labors, and rejoice in the final and full reward of their fidelity. Like early martyrs to our Christian faith, he has after a life of noble service, met a martyr's death to freedom and law and good government and nationality. And as the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church, so his blood may be new life and vigor to the cause in which he was sacrificed.

Then the text and its connection teach us to recognize God in the event which has shocked and bereaved us. The Patriarch who was most sorely and mysteriously tried, did not say "The Lord gave" and the Sabeans, the lightnings, the Chaldeans, the wind and the storm have taken away, but "The Lord hath taken away." His devout mind passed beyond the direct instrumentality to God, and acknowledged Him and His high and holy purpose. Inspiration teaches that he was right in this, and approved. So, in our meditations upon the bereavement which has visited the land, we should pass beyond the afflictive circumstances, to the Supreme Lord over all, and rest in submission to His will.

But the fullest and most memorable illustration of the truth under consideration is found in the death of our Lord and Savior. He was taken and with wicked hands crucified and slain. Treason and murder, violently finished his earthly career of benevolence and mercy. Yet it was, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; and by Him intended for the accomplishment of the greatest good. It became the most efficient means for the promotion of the very cause, which the guilty perpetrators of the deed intended to crush. Their own

act, in the overruling providence of God, was made to work out their discomfiture, and the speedy triumph of His doctrines, whom they had causelessly and cruelly put to death.

We should not hesitate, then, to employ the language of our text to-day. While we can never forget the fiendish spirit and fiendish act of the assassin, and of all accomplices and abettors, let us in our thoughts rise above these, to Him whose "throne is established in the Heavens and whose kingdom ruleth over all;" let us acknowledge His wise and holy providence in the great national bereavement, and endeavor by consideration of the lessons it is adapted to inculcate and by prayer, to make improvement acceptable to Him, the Supreme Lord and great Disposer of all events and interests.

III. The remaining clause of the text, "Blessed be the name of the Lord," shows distinctly the spirit with which the severe dispensation should be regarded and improved. It is the spirit of submission and confidence, ready to endure and do as the divine will and purpose may appoint.

It is comparatively easy to bless the name of the Lord when He gives. But to do it when He takes away, is one of the most difficult duties required of faith and piety. It would seem enough if we could only be still and know that God is Sovereign; certainly enough, if we could bring our reluctant hearts to say in truth, "Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." But to go beyond, and even praise him in the midst of his judgments, to bless his name while our hearts are bleeding under their heavy strokes, how can we? Some considerations may aid us.

He is the Supreme and rightful Sovereign, the just and merciful Ruler, "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, the only wise God over all." "Clouds and darkness are round about him" but "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." He is always worthy, then, of devout adoration and praise. Though disaster and change, bereavement and sorrow may overtake us, He is the same and in Him there is no shadow of turning, and all the

great reasons for praise remain as they were when our sky was unclouded and no storm beat upon us. We should rise by faith above the overhanging gloom, and draw near into His august and gracious presence, where light is ever shining, and who doeth all things well ; who when He arises to save the meek of the earth makes the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder restrains ; who exalteth, who abaseth ; who hath seen the end from the beginning ; who is from everlasting to everlasting ; whose truth and mercy endure to all generations ; and who, in working all things according to the counsel of his own will, makes them work together for good to them that love him ; into His presence should we draw near, and there rest, and wait His will. For our comfort and hope, no special sight of special reasons, in a special emergency is necessary. He is ever and alone worthy of entire confidence. " Though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea ; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled " yet should we not fear ; but in every experience of His providential government, bless His great and adorable name who was and is, and is to come—the most High and most Holy.

Then, it should be remembered that when He takes away, He takes but what He gave ; and what perhaps we poorly prized, and still more, perhaps, entirely failed to recognize as *His* good gift. He but recalls His own. It was ours only while He was pleased to bestow ; and when He is pleased to withdraw, has our ownership been so changed, that we can justly challenge His right or His kindness even ? If we were ready to thank Him, that He gave us a President whom we could trust, shall we cease to be grateful for the gift, because the time has come in His providence, when it must be recalled ? or rather, mindful of His right and our dependence, of His wisdom and our ignorance, shall we still bless His name even in our bereavement, and notwithstanding the great national loss which it involves ?

Especially will this appear obligatory if we call to mind how much and various good was comprehended in the gift, and

how long it was continued. Was it nothing, that a worthy compeer of the worthies of the purer days of the Republic should again occupy the Presidential chair? that, in these times of corruption and bribery, base compliance and open treason, an honest man should honor the seat which Washington filled and leave a memory like his, untarnished and priceless in its influence upon succeeding generations? Nothing, that a representative of the genius of our Institutions, should rise to be their head and support in the most fearful conflict to which they were ever exposed; and though surrounded with most unfavorable circumstances, should be able to command for them and himself the respect of the world? Nothing, that though bringing to his place few of the accessories so generally deemed essential to successful rule, he should administer most difficult and complicated affairs, in new and untried conditions, over an extended territory, with a compass and versatility and pertinacity of wisdom, and an exalted patriotism and fidelity, which should disappoint all prophecies of evil, all sinister hopes of enemies, all sanguine hopes of friends indeed, and bring so near triumphant issue, the overthrow of a gigantic rebellion? And nothing, that it should be done not only without damage to the cardinal principles of free constitutional government, but should furnish demonstration of the capacity of our Institutions for the severest tests of adversity? Is it nothing that slavery should be abolished at the Capital, and the slave trade treated as piracy? That millions of bondmen should be set at liberty, and that such progress has been made towards the entire extinction of slavery, by its constitutional prohibition? Will not the Negro race hold Abraham Lincoln in most grateful remembrance? Will not their children's children revere and bless his name? Will not nations hereafter freed from the yoke of tyranny, honor him among the friends of the people, of whom he came, and for whom, and for governments by them and for them, he lived and died? With what steady trust and unwearied devotion, simple honesty and noble patriotism, fearlessness of personal

danger and generous accessibility to all and regard for the poorest and lowest ; with what persistent purpose, yet unruffled moderation, has he stood in all the raging storm of the past four years, the conflict of arms and of opinions, not a partizan President, not a sectionalist, not an ambitious seeker of power or fame, but the head of the people, by their will and the will of God, to save them from national dismemberment and death, to destroy the most dangerous foe of union and peace, and to preserve our free institutions for us and our children and coming generations ! His success in the judgment of the people may be estimated by their lamentation on his sudden death.— That he was preserved so long and accomplished so much, furnishes abundant reason to bless the name of the Lord. Any thought of ours, that his presence and influence were needed now and hereafter, even more than heretofore, that perils as great await us in readjustment as have attended the conflict of arms, should not interfere with this tribute of praise. He had recently given some indications of the general policy deemed appropriate by him in order to re-construction. The light of his spirit and example will shine upon the path of his successor. The same able counselors in whom he trusted and on whom he leaned, will supply their treasures of wisdom and experience, and the same military and naval leaders continue their services. Without serious interruption the government will move steadily forward. The full aim of the conspirators was not accomplished. It may be, in the mysterious designs of Providence, that so much was permitted and no more, that, while the government should not be greatly embarrassed, it would have additional motive and increased power to fathom and overwhelm that greater conspiracy against its life, of which this was a subordinate part. The result may be more signal triumph over treason, the more complete and enduring salvation of the country from the machinations of its foes, by their total defeat, and a re-construction which shall prevent any re-suscitation of their power hereafter.

But without consideration here of probable results of the

dispensation which has removed the late incumbent of the Presidential chair, enough was actually accomplished by his administration to call for the highest gratitude and praise to the Sovereign Lord of all. Especially does there seem to me occasion for gratitude, on account of the bright example which he has bequeathed to the country. It is an example of true Republican virtue; an example of elevated moral excellence securing its legitimate reward of approbation and honor; an example of the highest success by sincere fidelity and patience, worthy of universal attention and regard. President Lincoln rose from humble origin, to the foremost position of the world. In that position he won a name which will live among the brightest and best on the pages of history. The main element of his character, to which this eminent success must be ascribed, was that which procured for him, before his elevation to the Presidency, that most honorable title of "honest." He was a man of integrity; sincere, pure, upright, faithful, true. Interest did not blind him. Prosperity did not corrupt him. He was the same in the Presidential chair, and among the dignitaries of our own and other lands as in the retirements of private life. His sterling integrity summoned all his energies to the discharge of duty however difficult. This, made him the head of the nation, not of a party or a section. He was not his own but his country's. This, nerved him to constancy and perseverance. It drew from him all of which he was capable in the trying ordeal to which himself as well as the country was subjected. He had other remarkable elements of character; a generous, noble heart, a discriminating and well balanced judgment. But integrity was the main root and crowning excellence of his successful career. Let Politicians and Diplomats, Rulers and Ruled, Statesmen and People, all orders and all classes, and especially let young men aspiring to distinction, take note of it; and see how much true greatness depends upon simple integrity; how much the largest success depends upon it; and that, high moral excellence is essential to the highest and most enduring fame. It is an ex-

ample which will be a light and a blessing to the country whose inheritance it is, enkindling patriotism, renewing fidelity, stimulating toil, strengthening patience; frowning on partizan animosity, sectional hatred, fraudulent conduct or revengeful passions, in whatever positions they may be indulged or cherished; an example which will tend to bind the people in closer union under our admirable Constitution, and to excite among them the cultivation and practice of all public and private virtue. This example is and will be the more conspicuous and hallowed, by the method of the President's death and the sacred memories gathered around it; memories of the profound movement of the public mind throughout the land; of the solemnities of this day of funeral rites and national sorrow, and the solemnities of transferring the remains of the venerated dead from the Capital to their resting place in the bosom of the great West, rapidly becoming the center of population and power: memories which a grateful people will not allow to perish, but will perpetuate in their own affectionate remembrance and by tradition to their children, by story and song, in history and by monuments reared in commemoration of the worth and service of one so dear to the heart of the Nation.

But we should pass to another leading thought. Trial is often made the means of good, of good which so far as we can judge could not have been without the trial. Through toil and sorrow, our own or others, we receive some of the greatest benefits of life. The sufferings of our Lord and Redeemer must needs be for the salvation of men. The sufferings of this terrible war are a discipline of the nation. They are adapted to purify and improve it, to train and prepare it for a more glorious future. This last great sorrow is no exception. It brings discipline and instruction which properly regarded will secure good, commensurate with the sacrifice which has been required of us. Herein we shall find reason, even while bowed beneath the blow, to bless the name of the Lord who has taken away.

How clear and impressive the lesson from this startling providence, of the transitoriness of all earthly glory, and the insufficiency of all earthly good! In a moment they may be nothing to him who has enjoyed them in the fullest measure! The highest position does not screen from death. Reputation, honor, applause, human love, confidence and veneration can not prevent it. Its close of all of earth, and its introduction to the untried state which succeeds, await every individual, whoever he may be and whatever his position, or circumstances.

There is need, then, of something more than aught which is merely earthly, of something higher and better than its most elevated positions and richest treasures can bestow; something better even than simple patriotism and integrity can give; something which shall render these virtues acceptable in His presence before whom the departed spirit appears, and who justly claims regard to Himself as the supreme motive of action; something, thus, which may be carried to the eternal world, and there constitute an enduring treasure, and everlasting honor. There needs before and more than aught else, and to beget and crown all other excellence, true piety, sincere regard to God, love to him and trust in him through our adorable Redeemer. We have the confidence that this was the crowning excellence of our lamented Chief Magistrate. In whose view does it not hallow his virtues, and endear his memory now that he is gone? Who, without it, would himself, go down to the grave? Our true life here, whatever stations we may occupy, is so to fill them and discharge the duties which Providence assigns, in dependence on the divine Savior, that even death can not rob us of our hopes and acquisitions, but only transfer us to the world of their full and perpetual enjoyment.

Next, this startling providence seems to utter a rebuke of our spirit and mode of rejoicing; not of our rejoicing, which was as natural as breathing where life is; not of our mutual congratulation and hearty greeting, and glad thanksgiving, that victory was ours and the sun of peace was beginning to gild the

eastern horizon, but of the spirit and mode of rejoicing. The spirit was too obviously that of self-elevation and pride; as though success had been achieved solely by the might and prowess of the nation. In a moment and before exultation had ceased, the head and representative of that strength lay struggling in death. In the mode of rejoicing there were excesses which deeply marred the general festivities. Bacchanalian revels are no fit celebration of a great nation's victory over vice and crime. They show no just appreciation of the event, no right estimate of the cause which has signally triumphed, and can not promote fitness for the duties it may yet demand. How suddenly on this occasion the intelligence breaks upon all who are participating in them; he, who has been the most prominent in achieving the results over which you irrationally rejoice, has been stricken by the hand of an assassin, and the full extent of the conspiracy and the danger can not be known. With this intelligence a warning voice seems to be heard "cease your revels; break forever from their spell; be men; ever ready for the call of duty, ever ready for the call of God.

Next, how clearly does this providence teach us to place our supreme confidence in God alone. It adds another, to all the previous admonitory lessons imparted by the leveling power of death, that God only is great. All human greatness sinks to insignificance before Him, and His sovereignty. He alone is enduring. All human power is transitory. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away." At no time had confidence in President Lincoln been so implicit and general. Little danger was apprehended with him at the helm. When we prayed for the country, our first petition was, "Spare O Lord our Chief Magistrate. Shield him from harm that he may guide us through the peril to safety and peace." At once and unexpectedly, his hand, palsied in death, drops the helm. The lesson of Scripture is enforced afresh, and most impressively. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence

in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in Princes." However worthy of confidence men may be, and however able, they are still mortal. No man, not the best, not the wisest, not the most able can be a sufficient dependence. No President, no Cabinet officers, no generals in the field, no armies, no navies, no resources can alone be a sufficient dependence, for the salvation and welfare of the country. Higher than they all, is the Lord Jehovah, and his favoring Providence is essential to success. We should learn man's proper place, and accordingly estimate his agency and its value. That place is one of subordination to the Supreme Ruler. In every enterprise which has his approbation men are workers together under him. He will overrule for its advancement whatever may become of them. The cause is more than any man connected with it. He may die, it may live. He may be destroyed by its enemies. It will survive their hostility, and others be provided for every emergency. While the supreme trust of the country is in God, for its defence, we need not despair nor faint, because its ablest defenders fall. The sacrifices required may sometimes seem too great and numerous, and we may shrink from the sufferings they involve. But patiently endured they will not be in vain. He in whom we trust, who appoints them for good, will bring us through them, and by means of them to complete victory and substantial peace and prosperity.

Next, the event we deplore may be viewed as intended to furnish a clearer and fuller view of the spirit and fruits of slavery. Their manifestation as essential barbarism, had been more and more distinct from the inception of the Rebellion through its whole progress. The murder of wounded men, the desecration of the graves of the dead, the systematized exposure and starvation of prisoners of war, the massacre of captured negro soldiers, the inhuman methods of warfare devised and carried out, were giving the people new and deeper impressions of the fearful malignity of the evil. But perhaps there was need of this last exhibition, this culmination of its

atrocities in assassination, and in the assassination of him who was highest, most trusted, and beloved; whom the people knew, not as a tyrant, but as one of the kindest and most generous of men and merciful of Rulers, and at the very time seeking how with safety to the country he might extend amnesty to the largest number of the vanquished foe; perhaps this exhibition was needed to produce conviction sufficiently deep and extensive to accomplish the entire destruction of the cause of such terrible outrages upon humanity, and of the woes under which our country has been staggering. It is now more obvious, that unchecked, this gigantic evil would have plunged us finally into the condition of the South American States; that in the ascendant it would have reduced the whole land to barbarism. We can not well forget the manner in which this subject was treated in the last inaugural address of President Lincoln. His words now seem to have been almost prophetic. The Almighty has his own purpose. "Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh." If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offenses which in the providence of God must needs come, but which having continued through his appointed time, he now wills to remove, and that he gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes, which the believers in a living God always ascribe to him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may soon pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn by the lash, shall be paid with another drawn by the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said. "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

This, the last judgment is the heaviest of all; and is the more adapted to produce serious consideration of the under-

lying cause, and the necessity of its removal. It summons the people anew to appear in the presence of the Lord, to confess their sins and implore his mercy; anew to resolve that every fetter shall be broken and all the oppressed go free; and to seek and pursue the course which a just God can approve, that his judgments may be stayed, and his mercy revealed in our complete deliverance from the fearful woes consequent upon the impious offense of slavery. If such could be the results of this strange chastisement, there would be reason notwithstanding its severity to adopt the language of the Patriarch, "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord."

But again the tendency of this providence may be to re-instate in the public mind a proper sense of justice. This had been losing its place and lawful power before the war. In some measure corrected, there was still danger that it would be too much restrained by dread of executing appropriate punishment or ill advised commiseration of the guilty. There is such reality as crime, as guilt, and deserved punishment, as the necessity and duty of its execution by human tribunals. Treason is crime. Plunging a great nation into intestine war, without just and sufficient cause is crime. To do it in the interest of Slavery, for its extension and perpetuity is greater crime, as the cause itself is criminal. What the exigencies of the future may demand in the way of clemency or of justice toward those who have covered themselves with the guilt of these crimes in the present war, it would be unbecoming to affirm. But that justice should be associated with mercy in the final adjudication, we cannot doubt. To secure this, may be one tendency of the event we deplore. Certainly nothing has occurred which brings out in clearer light the criminality of the Rebellion and of the spirit which prompted and has sustained it, than the assassination of the President, and the attempted assassination of others associated with him in the conduct of the government. Nothing has fixed it more deeply in the convictions of this people, nothing shown it more distinctly to the nations of the world,

and nothing has stirred more deeply the public sense of justice which demands the visitation of punishment upon the guilty.

I do not refer now to the spirit of revenge which blind impulse felt when the startling intelligence first shocked every sensibility, but to that deeper, calmer, stronger sense of its guilt and of deserved penalty, abiding still, when impulse has ceased to act. The sense of justice may sometimes be satisfied with leaving its execution to the dispensations of a just God. But he has established governments for the execution to some extent of the behests of His justice, that they may be a terror to evil doers, and a protection to those who do well. That our government may fulfill its mission in this respect, the people must have due appreciation of that mission, so as to prompt and sustain it, in all which is essential to justice or necessary to public order and security. The mysterious providence which has so deeply affected the public mind may have most important part, in securing this result in the present critical condition of the country. It may eventuate in the more complete vindication of law and order; in the more certain and suitable punishment of the guilty; in the fuller guarantee of their rights to those who have been in bondage; in the more thorough and settled pacification of the country; the increased stability of the government, and its augmented security and usefulness, glory and power hereafter.

Then again the result may be to show more distinctly and fully the value of the Institutions which God has given us; to produce a higher estimate and better support and improvement of them at home, and greater respect and more benign influence abroad. The assassination of him who fills the Presidential chair does not rob the nation of a Chief Magistrate.—Such provision is made that he never dies. The vacancy is immediately filled, not by a minor or successful conspirator against established order, but by one designated and chosen under the same constitution which elevated his Predecessor to power, and one familiar with the principles and methods of administration, and around whom the confidence and support

of the people are at once and naturally gathered. Violent changes are precluded. Revolution does not follow. Affairs move on, almost, as though no interruption had occurred.—Conspirators are disappointed. A price is put on their heads. The avenger is on their path, and will find them out, and execute the doom of their dreadful guilt. The people are horror struck, overwhelmed with grief, humbled; and more deeply sensible than ever before of the weighty responsibilities which rest upon them are rallied anew to the maintenance of the cause which has been tasking their energies and demanding great sacrifices of treasure and of more precious life. More and more, and all that may be needed is ready to be laid on the altar of the country. The spirit of party is hushed by the dread event. Opposition hides its head. The people were never more united. One sentiment prevails. Sorrow and veneration for the dead. Renewed devotion to the country and the government, with solemn purpose that its authority shall be vindicated and made triumphant over all its foes.—Confidence returns, and rests in settled assurance of the benign result. When success has crowned our arms and measures, with a general peace and a restored union without the virus of slavery to weaken it, how obviously will it appear that our Institutions have stood the severest tests, and are destined to be permanent; a permanent blessing to the millions under their protection, and a clearer light and nobler example to the nations of the earth. Then too may it appear more distinctly than now, that this heaviest cloud which has overshadowed us, was freighted with the richest blessings. The martyr death of Abraham Lincoln may have purchased good for his country, great, as his patriot life conferred; and the Supreme Lord will be recognized as blessed, both when He gave and when He took away.

Finally, the effect of the whole, of the dispensation and of the truths which it suggests, should be, our renewed consecration, in humble reliance upon God who is our refuge, to the country and cause for which our venerated President was made

a sacrifice. Confidence and support should be at once transferred to his successor. Prayer should continually ascend, that he may be as fully endowed for the office and its grave responsibilities now and henceforth, as his distinguished Predecessor was, for the times in which its high duties were devolved upon him. He too is the people's choice and our President by the constitution, and the providence of God. Sustained by the people, and Providence whose favor their supplications invoke, Andrew Johnson's administration may be as eminently successful as Abraham Lincoln's and finish the great work left to its charge with like success and like imperishable honor.

No more fitting words can be employed in this connection than those used by our deceased President at the consecration of the Gettysburg Cemetery. "Four score and seven years ago our Fathers brought forth upon this continent a new Nation, conceived in Liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battle field of that war. We are met to dedicate a portion of it as the final resting-place of those who here gave their lives, that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense, we can not dedicate. We can not consecrate, we can not hallow this ground. The brave men living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it, far above our power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work that they have thus far so nobly carried on. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us; that from these honored dead, we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here resolve that the dead shall not have died in vain; that the nation shall, under God have a new birth of freedom; and that

Governments of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth."

To this cause, Abraham Lincoln, has now given, in accordance with the consecration there made, a consecration hallowed by associated consecration to the God of all destinies, "the last full measure of devotion." To-day we, and the people throughout the land, are summoned to like consecration, over his remains, and in the midst of most affecting and general exhibitions of the greatness of the sacrifice involved in his death. Could the sentiments so nobly uttered by him, penetrate and fill the hearts of the entire country, and a new dedication, by unanimous consent, be made to the unity and perpetuity of the nation; the dead will not have died in vain; the unfinished work which President Lincoln has left will be well accomplished; the great task remaining to be done, will be done; the nation will live, and its future be nobler and better than its past.

Certainly will this result, if there should be associated with this consecration to the country such recognition of the Supreme Lord over all, as His word and providential government require. The nation humbled, He will exalt in due time. From their prayers He will not turn away. Their praises, He will accept. Blessing Him when He gives and when He takes away, we shall be blessed by Him. "Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea happy is that people, whose God is the Lord."

10
18

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 012 027 159 3

