

E

457

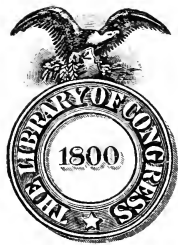
.8 /

1172

WILLIAMS

Lincoln

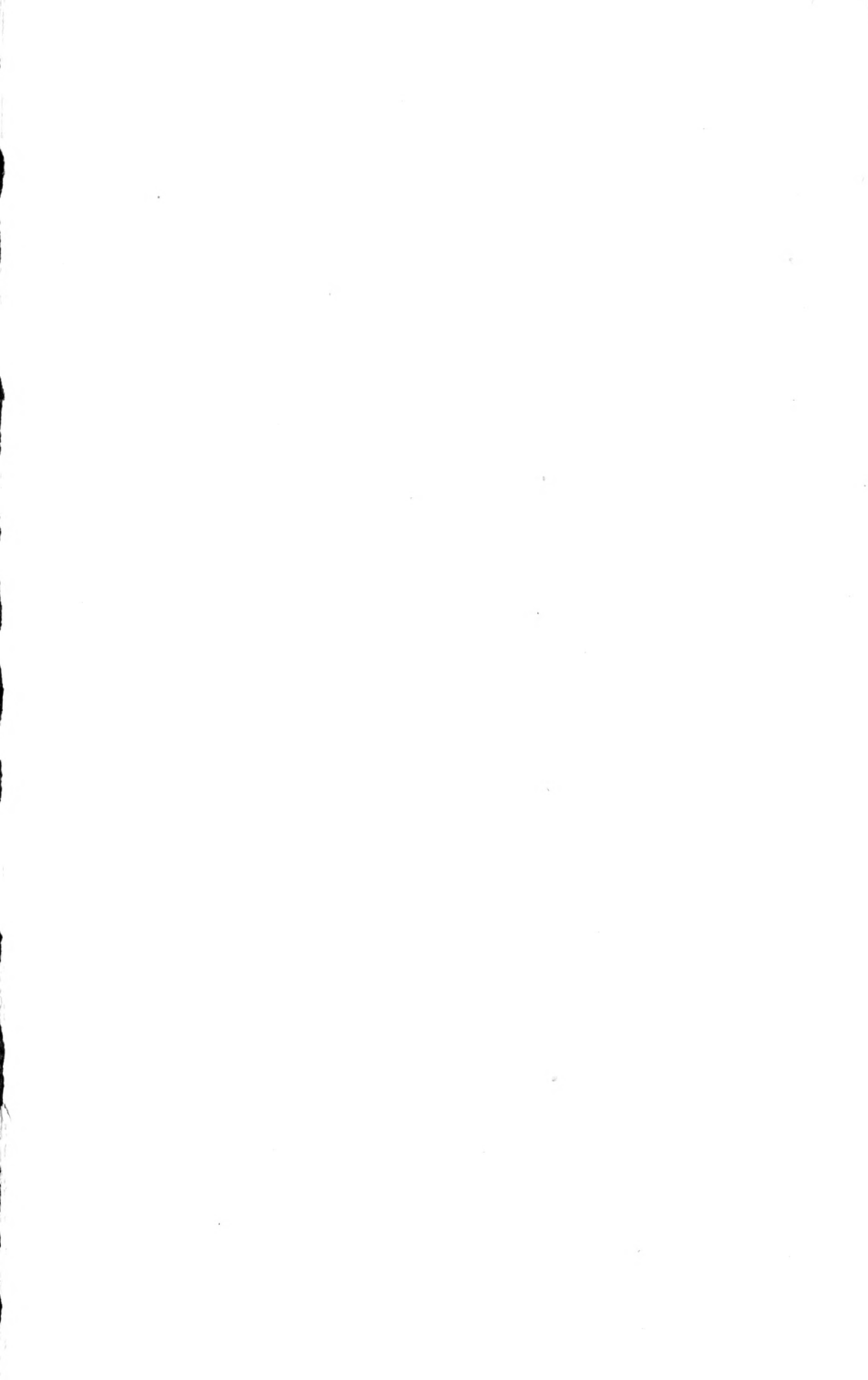




Class E 131

Book 18

W72



57
420

GOD'S CHOSEN RULER:

BY

REV. ROBERT H. WILLIAMS.

LIBRARY OF (unreadable)
CITY (unreadable)

"GOD'S CHOSEN RULER."

A SERMON:

DELIVERED ON A

DAY OF NATIONAL HUMILIATION AND PRAYER,

IN THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

OF

FREDERICK CITY, MD.,

BY THE PASTOR,

REV. ROBERT H. WILLIAMS.



FREDERICK, MD.

SCHLEY, KEEFER & CO.

1865.

E-457
.8
M 72

CORRESPONDENCE.

FREDERICK, JUNE 6TH, 1865.

REV. ROBERT H. WILLIAMS:

Dear Sir,—The undersigned, thinking that the circulation of the sermon delivered by you on the day of National humiliation and mourning, would be useful, request a copy for publication.

G. EICHELBERGER,
E. H. ROCKWELL,
WM. RAYMOND SANDERSON,
THOMAS M. MARKELL,
SAMUEL R. HOGG,
JONATHAN TYSON.

FREDERICK, JUNE 8TH, 1865.

Gentlemen,—I am conscious, that the following discourse is not worthy of the occasion which called us together. I defer to your judgement and give a copy for publication.

To G. Eichelberger, and others. With respect, I am yours,
ROBERT H. WILLIAMS.

•
•
•
•
•

“For it was his from the Lord.”—1st Kings, 2, 15.

These are the words of Adonijah, who was at this time plotting the overthrow of Solomon, for the purpose of occupying the throne himself. Adonijah, after failing in some of his plans, seeks to marry Abishag, thereby, gaining her friends and relations to his side. But he could not get possession of Abishag without the consent of Solomon. This he thought he could get, through the interposition of Bathsheba, his mother. “In his speech to her, Adonijah insinuated that the kingdom was his by right of primogeniture, and that he had been in possession of it by the consent of all Israel.” This however was false for it was Solomon’s from the Lord, and Solomon the people favored. But he meant to induce Bathsheba to compassionate his case. To make a merit with her of peaceably receding from his claim, and that she might not suspect any ill design, he, at length, conceded that it was Solomon’s from the Lord. Although these words were uttered by a man whose heart was full of deceit; yet they were true words. Solomon’s right to rule was from the Lord. Solomon saw through the designs of Adonijah, and was fully convinced that he was aiming to overthrow him. “He perceived him still restless, aspiring, and scheming.” To show the inefficacy therefore of every application in his favor to convince Bathsheba of the impropriety of the request, and to declare the necessity of his death in order to secure public peace, and the establishment of his authority, he spoke with great earnestness and decision. He declared, “As the Lord liveth, who hath established me, and set me on the throne of David, my father, and who hath made me a house, as he hath promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day. And King Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah, the son of Tehoiada, and he fell upon him that he died.” Solomon felt that government cannot be secure, while they who aim to subvert it remain unpunished, and such as have

been convicted of treasonable designs are proper persons to be sacrificed for the public good, and for an example to others. "Apparent severity to them may eventually be mercy to thousands." As we come to contemplate the virtues, and mourn the death of Abraham Lincoln, let us remember that God placed him in the Presidential chair. We can say (but not with the same spirit) as Adonijah said of Solomon, "It was his from the Lord." We may all use this language to-day in sincerity. And the traitor, who has been brought to grief, and who now lies in the prison, whose name is not worthy of mention, feels, whether he acknowledges it or not, that, our President's right to rule was from the Lord. When we consider the complicated machinery of society we see many, multitudes of agencies at work to bring about results. Men, acts, words, thoughts, emotions, all work and interwork to make history what it is.

If the secret emotions of a single conspirator had been different from what they have been, the whole dreadful plan, which they had formed, might have failed. If we remove the most insignificant agency in a good enterprise, it may fail altogether. It is apparent then, from what we have said, that every man is acting a part in the great drama of history. Every man helps to make history. All his labor, and conduct, and thoughts, and emotions, in some way, assist in making the course of human events just what it is. Whatever position we occupy, whether it be obscure or conspicuous, low or high, is a position which *we* must occupy, or some other, who will think, and act as we do to make history what it is. God may have placed each one of us here to do one little act, or to speak a single word, at the time when the act or word will tell most for His glory and the interests of society. Some times men are a long time in training, before they are fit to do what God intended they should do. Then every pain they feel, every delay they experience, every lesson they learn, in short, every little circumstance and event in life, prepares them for their work.—This

is true of us; but it is especially true of God's instruments for *great* good. Joseph felt this, when in Egypt he declared to his guilty brothers, "It was not you that sent me hither, but God." When Moses had been forty years in Midian, forty years after he thought he had been called to the work of a deliverer, then the Lord appeared unto him and said, "And now come I will send thee into Egypt." We cannot tell what lessons he learned in his sojourn in Midian; but no doubt, every day added to his preparation for the work, which God had for him to do. In a wonderful manner has God trained many men of this land for the work which they have performed. Now he develops their powers by pain, now by great labor, now by trial. Now in this way and now in that. Look at Washington how his character is beautifully moulded by the efforts of a mother. By this thing he is taught stability. By that thing he learns to persevere. All the elements of a noble character are developed in him in the school to which God sent him. And the American people saw them in him, when they called him to be the Chief Magistrate of the Nation. All the victories he achieved, and all the defeats he met with, and all the anxiety he endured prepared him for the work, which God had for him to do. And this is true of the great man whose loss we mourn to-day. He was wonderfully fitted by trial, for the great duties he was called on to perform. God took him and trained him. He was training him when some in our midst were ridiculing him, and when they were using the vilest language concerning him. God had a work for him to do, and he prepared him for it, by want, by labor, by anxiety, by defeat. In the school of poverty, in early life, he learned useful lessons. In the school of labor he obtained a good physical development, which did much to sustain him in the arduous duties to which he attended. He knew what was in the heart of the masses, for he had felt the same himself. He deeply sympathized with them in their wants and distresses. He did not

bend to circumstances, but erect and firm he stood, while the great billows of destruction rolled around him. He did not fear to take; and also, to defend a position. If he had been less firm in the management of the national affairs, we, people and ruler, would have gone down together. But he looked out upon the storm, and with a steady and firm hand at the helm of the Ship of State guided us into the quiet waters of peace. He was deeply conscious of the great difficulties which environed him, as can be shown by his annual messages and all his proclamations. Listen to some of his words, taken from his message for 1865: "The occasion is piled high with difficulties, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country. We cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this Administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance nor insignificance can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down in honor or dishonor to the latest generation." Noble words are these, showing that he was conscious of the part he was acting in the great events which were transpiring. They show too, that he did not want his name to descend to posterity with a stain upon it. Right well has he preserved it from the least tarnish, and men will look upon it as one of the few immortal names, that are never to be forgotten. The restoration of the National authority stood all the years of the war before his mind. Multitudes of evils appeared to him, as they did to others, to be connected with the dismemberment of the Union. With a firm reliance upon God, he undertook the difficult task of preventing the separation. And what a task he had? Spies and enemies thronged the National capital. Every department swarmed with men of treasonable inclinations. Throughout the North there were many traitors at heart. Washington for a time was in the enemy's country, and all communication from the North and West cut off. What days

of agony and suspense were those! Then a mighty people, at this man's call, rose to their feet, and from that day they have been growing more and more powerful. The Nation had a sort of intuitive knowledge that he was the man for great undertakings. He rose more rapidly in the confidence of a mighty people than any man of any age, or any country. He soon acquired a knowledge of the work that was to be done. He soon had a comprehensive perception of the duties which devolved upon him. He early determined that every thing that stood in the way of the restoration of the Union should be removed. One great hindrance to his efforts, which stood up like a giant, and gave strength to the military power of the South, was Slavery. He declared "I will save the Union if I can with Slavery; but if not, Slavery must perish, for the Union must be preserved." Years ago it became the foundation of a political party. In this party sprung up the great political heresy that primary allegiance was due to the State, a secondary one only, to the United States. Then soon another theory, that Slavery was a divine institution grew up. And that power, controlled by such doctrines, continued to domineer up to the time they made war upon us. Abraham Lincoln saw that if the corner stone of this new power was removed, the building would fall. But the country was not ready for his proclamation of freedom, when he saw its necessity. But he prepared the public mind for it, by his message in March 1862, when he recommended a joint resolution, "that the United States ought to co-operate with any State, which may adopt a gradual abolishment of Slavery, giving to such State pecuniary aid" as a compensation for its loss. But still the war went on. He still held to his former convictions, and the people of the loyal North were gradually prepared for a more decided utterance on the subject of freedom. So in January 1st 1863, he issued a proclamation emancipating all Slaves within the insurgent States. Mr. Lincoln looked upon it as a necessity and it shaped after re-

suffs most wonderfully. It put one or two hundred thousand brave and gallant troops into our army, and weakened the South to the extent of upwards of a million. Mr. Lincoln was raised up to act in such an emergency as this, and he felt that he was merely an instrument in the hands of God, for after he had done it. he said, "The Nation's condition God alone can claim." How much he had to discourage him! The giant power of the enemy, a divided and troubled North, incompetent officers to command our armies, defeat on land, reverses on the sea, and a depleted treasury met his gaze. On he went, however, to his work. He toiled, and prayed, and wished, and hoped, as no other man has done during our troubles. He went forward, notwithstanding, that even many churches withheld their encouragement, and many ministers absolutely refused to pray for him. He felt that he was raised up for a great and glorious purpose, and that when it was accomplished his work was done. For this great work every struggle, and pain, and anxiety, and effort prepared him. To save our Country, and to give it to us with but one flag waving over us and one Constitution binding us together, was his great work. Noble, heroic soul, pure-minded, large-hearted patriot, how shall the nation rightly perpetuate the memory of his honorable deeds? We mourn to-day that he has been taken from us. But while we bend over his grave, we are reminded that his work is done and *well done*. Cheered by this thought, *thank God! we cry, thank God! we shout, that he gave him to us and spared him so long*. Slavery went down, we say, to save the Union. Down it went in accordance with the wishes of multitudes. Down it went *against* the wishes of many. The people of the South, themselves, could not prevent this measure; but really accelerated it, even before our armies had overrun the South, making the freedom of the slave certain, the Congress of the so-called Confederate States, by the consent and advice of Gen. Lee, made as many free as entered their military service. Mr. Lincoln

was raised up to be our ruler, while all the great principles of our Government were put to the test: One of those principles which has been maintained and set in a new light, is the principle of civil liberty. We have, ever since our existence as a nation, declared that "all men are born free and equal." But this was practically denied at the South, not because it was not regarded as true; but because a system of Slavery had been entailed upon them, which the wisest knew not how to abolish. It is indeed quite a new view of the institution of Slavery when it is called divine. The people of the South who have reaped the largest fruit from the institution years ago, thought it should be limited, and indeed abolished as soon as possible. Gen. Oglethrope wrote as follows in 1733: "My friends and I settled the colony of Georgia and by charter were established trustees to make laws. We determined not to suffer Slavery there. We would not suffer Slavery, which is against the Gospel, as well as the fundamental law of England, to be authorized under our authority." But we are told that the Slave merchants got the advantage over them and secured the favor of the English government. The Assembly of South Carolina in 1760, passed an act forbidding the importation of Slaves. The act, however, was annulled by the royal veto. In 1772, the Virginia Assembly petitioned the king on the subject of the slave trade, in the following language: "We are encouraged to look up to the throne and implore your majesty's paternal assistance in averting a calamity of a most alarming nature. The importation of slaves into the colonies from the coast of Africa, hath long been considered as a trade of great inhumanity, and under its present encouragement, we have too much reason to fear will endanger the very existence of your majesty's American dominions. Every one familiar with the history of the Declaration of Independence knows what language was used by Jefferson in its first draft. He called it piratical warfare. When he first took his seat in the first legislature of Virginia, under the new Constitution, he intro-

passed a bill aimed at Slave the trade, and the importation of slaves into Virginia. From the dawn of their existence until their separation from the mother country, did the American colonies maintain an unwearied, though unavailing, struggle with the crown on the question of Slavery. From the the time they took their stand as one independent government up to within a few years, have they been opposed to the whole system. The best men of Virginia have reasoned that "Slavery was inconsistent with Christianity, was in conflict with the rights of man; that it was a slow poison, daily contaminating the minds and morals of their people, that by reducing a part of their own species to abject inferiority they lost the idea of the dignity of man, which the hand of God had implanted in them for great and useful purposes." Such was the opinion of men in other days in the South, but they were unable to effect a change. The war has resolved the difficulty, the great difficulty, and Mr. Lincoln has declared to the world that the slave is free. The subject of Slavery will no more disturb our National councils. 'Tis true, the requisite number of States has not voted that Slavery shall be abolished. They may do it soon, or they may not do it at all. Their votes, as it seems to us, will effect the general result, but little. The nation has heard the wish of our murdered President and will not act contrary to it. If he had lived we would have followed his counsels; but much more now, when he has offered up his life for the sake of the principles he cherished. If the blood of thousands of soldiers who have fallen in this great war was not sufficient to secure civil liberty to all the inhabitants; we all feel that Mr. Lincoln at least, must be the price of freedom. When the negro is spoken of he will be called the freedman and not the slave as heretofore.

Great results will now follow the establishment of our Union and the abolition of Slavery. Our halls of Legislature will be cleansed from much pollution. Men who have trampled on the rights of human nature, who have enfeebled

and extinguished every liberal sentiment in their own hearts, men who have been petty tyrants, lording it over their fellows will not, for years at least, be found enacting our laws. A new class of men and as we trust, a purer, nobler set will now take the charge of our affairs. We expect for years to come, men like those of '76, pure, high-minded men, who will lead us on from one step to another, in safety and honor. Already has God shown to us who are to be his instruments for good to this land. A new set of men seem to have been brought to the surface. This may be said of our Legislative Halls, and of the commanders of our armies. Some men, who have been great among us, have given place to others, who, before the war, were living in obscurity. God has brought them forward, and we boast of many who have made themselves a name within the last four years. When we turn to the South we find many of their great men rapidly passing into obscurity, and falling into dishonored graves; and none coming up through their troubles, into prominence. That fact of itself shows that God's hand was against them, and is in contrast with the North. The maintainance of great sins cannot make great men, and the South shows it to-day. No longer will the two principles, State sovereignty and American Nationality be in conflict. Just before the war broke upon us in all its fury, we found our treasury emptied, our credit destroyed, our army demoralized, and our navy dispersed over the world. State after State in quick succession, charmed with the heresy of State sovereignty declared itself separated from the Federal Union. Then feebly, timidly were uttered these words by the Nation's representative, "The States have no right to secede; but nobody has any right to prevent them." Between the election of Mr. Lincoln and his inauguration, the months seemed long and dreary. Then such questions as the following forced themselves upon our attention, as the cloud grew thicker, and the angry elements threatened destruction: Is our National life a mere bubble? Are all our hopes and the hopes

of millions in other lands to be blasted? After a transitory existence must free institutions fall into decay? Shall this land, to which so many eyes are turned, become so corrupt, and oppressed, and ruined that men shall flee from it as though plague or pestilence were resting upon it? Those were dark days through which we passed. Patriotism seemed to be asleep, and for a time it seemed as though we would fall to pieces by our own inaction and sloth. At length the traitor arrangements were complete. At early morn of a clear April day scarcely before it was light, the first shot was fired at Fort Sumter. It went booming, and booming and booming over the land. It seemed as though every man in the giant North heard that shot. Then came the call of the mighty dead. Then was seen the brave boy, stirred by a noble emotion, hurrying home to gain a mother's consent to go to sustain the Nation's honor. The big tears started, and her heart was wrung with grief as she gave her consent. "There was weeping upon the threshold of his old mother's home as he started off. In one hand he held the bible, her parting gift; and with his other, clasped around his dear mother's neck; she breathed upon him her farewell prayer, and sobbed the benediction of the saint upon his head. And away he went to the field of strife." And the husband came home after hearing the news. He had a troubled look. "What now?" his wife asks. "The country is struggling for its life," he says. "The dear old flag has been fired upon and the Capital is in danger. The country wants men. Thousands are responding 'we come, we come,' and I too must go." Then he says, "Wife, can you spare me for a little, for a few months only?" He takes up his little ones one by one, and kissing their tender cheeks sets them down again. He asked God, in an agony of prayer for direction. "Husband," said his noble wife, "you know the path of duty. If God bids you go Heaven will care for both you and your loved ones here." All night he pleads with God for his counsel. In the morning he read, "The Lord is my

shepherd, I shall not want," and bows for the last time around the family altar, and gets strength from God. He rises a noble, christian man, a patriot. "Farewell!" he said, and gave the last kisses and went forth to hold up his country's flag. Thousands of such sights were witnessed, because of the conflict which existed between some of the States and the Federal Government. After years of strife we have taught every rebellious State, that they have no right to secede, and that they owe paramount allegiance to the Federal Government. After this we shall have more religion in our politics, and no doubt, more of what some falsely style politics in our religion. The Government and the Church have grown nearer together during the war. Law and religion cannot be divorced. There is a sacredness about our National emblems, which will permit them to be displayed in our most sacred places. The minister may lift his voice boldly for his Country without fearing to be called a stump orator or politician. The minister that ignores his Country either through fear of offending, or because of his own little love for her, will be invited to attend to his duties in a more spiritual clime. He might do for a people who need no civil law to control them, but certain we are, the majority of right-thinking men are beginning to feel, that they are not the men for these times and this country. But I must hasten to close. Funeral eulogies upon the character of our President have been pronounced in every city and town in the loyal States. A sad and solemn procession has moved from the National Capital to his former home in Springfield, Ill. Approach ye admirers of his greatness and behold him now. How pale! How silent! "No admiring throug weep and melt and tremble at his words." A shroud, a coffin, a grave, are all that remain to him here. But are these all he now possesses. No! There is something beyond life which we trust he is now enjoying. He felt his dependence upon God and frequently expressed it. When he left his home for Washington, in a

public address, he said, "I hope you, my friends, will all pray that I may receive that divine assistance without which I cannot succeed; but with which success is certain." Mr. Gladstone, an eminent English Statesman, said to another, "Mr. Lincoln's recent address on his inauguration, showed a moral elevation which commanded the respect of every right feeling man. I was taken captive by so striking an utterance. I see in it the effect of sharp trial when rightly borne to raise men to a higher level of thought and feeling than they could otherwise have reached. It is by cruel suffering that nations are born to a better life, and to individuals a like experience produces a like result." We believe he knew in what arm to find the strength he needed. Not long ago he was asked if he loved Jesus, our only hope for eternal life. It is said he buried his face in his handkerchief and wept. He then said, "When I left home to take this chair of State I was not a christian. When my son died, the severest trial of my life, I was not a christian; but when I went to Gettysburg and looked upon the graves of those who had fallen in the defence of the Country, I then and there consecrated myself to Christ. I do love Jesus." He died as we humbly hope a christian. Great and good deeds for our nation made him great among us; but being a christian is all that can make him great in heaven. His deeds are worthy of being inscribed upon the heart of the Nation. He is deserving of a monument reaching to the skies. His example is worthy of imitation. His hope in Christ should be our hope. May we all, individually, when we come to die have it to say, in the language of God's chosen instrument for good to us, "*I do love Jesus.*"



10/1/20

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 012 046 864 9