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SERMON

DELIVERED IN THE
UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY,

ON THE DAY OF THE FUNERAL OF THE LATE PRESIDENT,

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

BY

MASON NOBLE,

CHAPLAIN U. S. N.

NEWPORT:
GEORGE T. HAMMOND, PRINTER.
1865.

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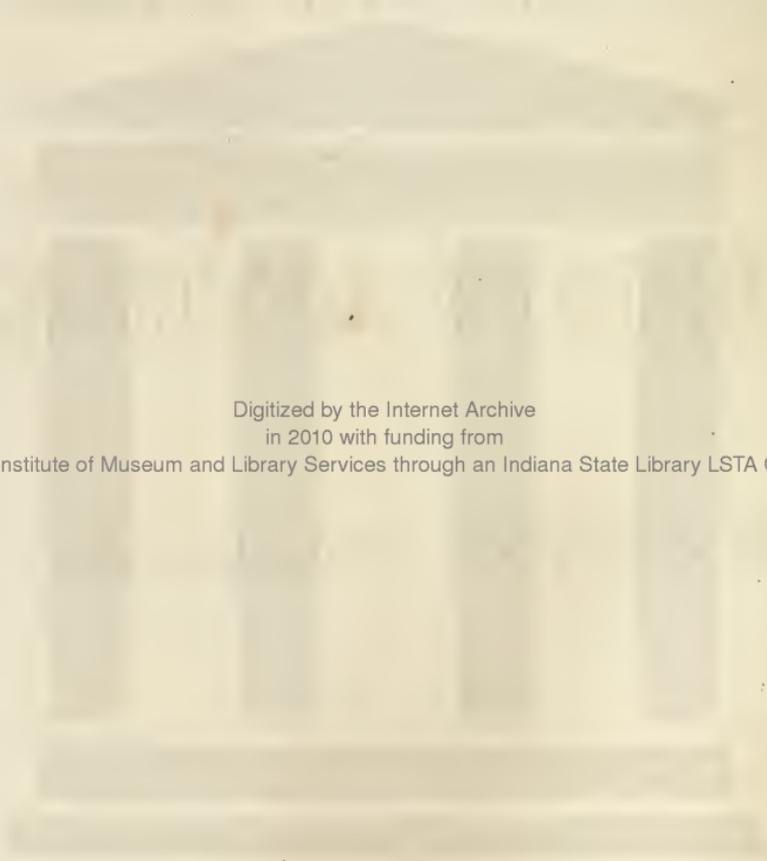
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CORRESPONDENCE.

U. S. NAVAL ACADEMY, }
Newport, R. I. April 20, 1865. }

DEAR SIR :—Having listened with deep interest to your Sermon of yesterday, and desiring that its sentiments may be more widely known, we respectfully request a copy for publication.

The events which called us together were of the most solemn character, and have made a most serious impression. The calamity which has befallen the nation has spread over our land a fearful gloom not soon to be dispelled.

Your remarks yesterday were admirably calculated to shew the feeling which animates the entire American people, and while feelingly observant of the noble character, true patriotism and spotless integrity, of our late chief magistrate, they were fitted to remind us of the existence of our Creator from whence cometh comfort in the hour of affliction. Hoping for a favorable reply, we remain
Very respectfully,

REV. MASON NOBLE.

F. M. HENDRIX, R. B. BRADFORD,
Committee from the 1st Class.
R. WATERMAN, M. S. DAY,
Committee from the 2d Class,
W. H. FRAILEY, J. P. NEWELL.
Committee from the 3d Class.

U. S. NAVAL ACADEMY, }
April 20, 1865. }

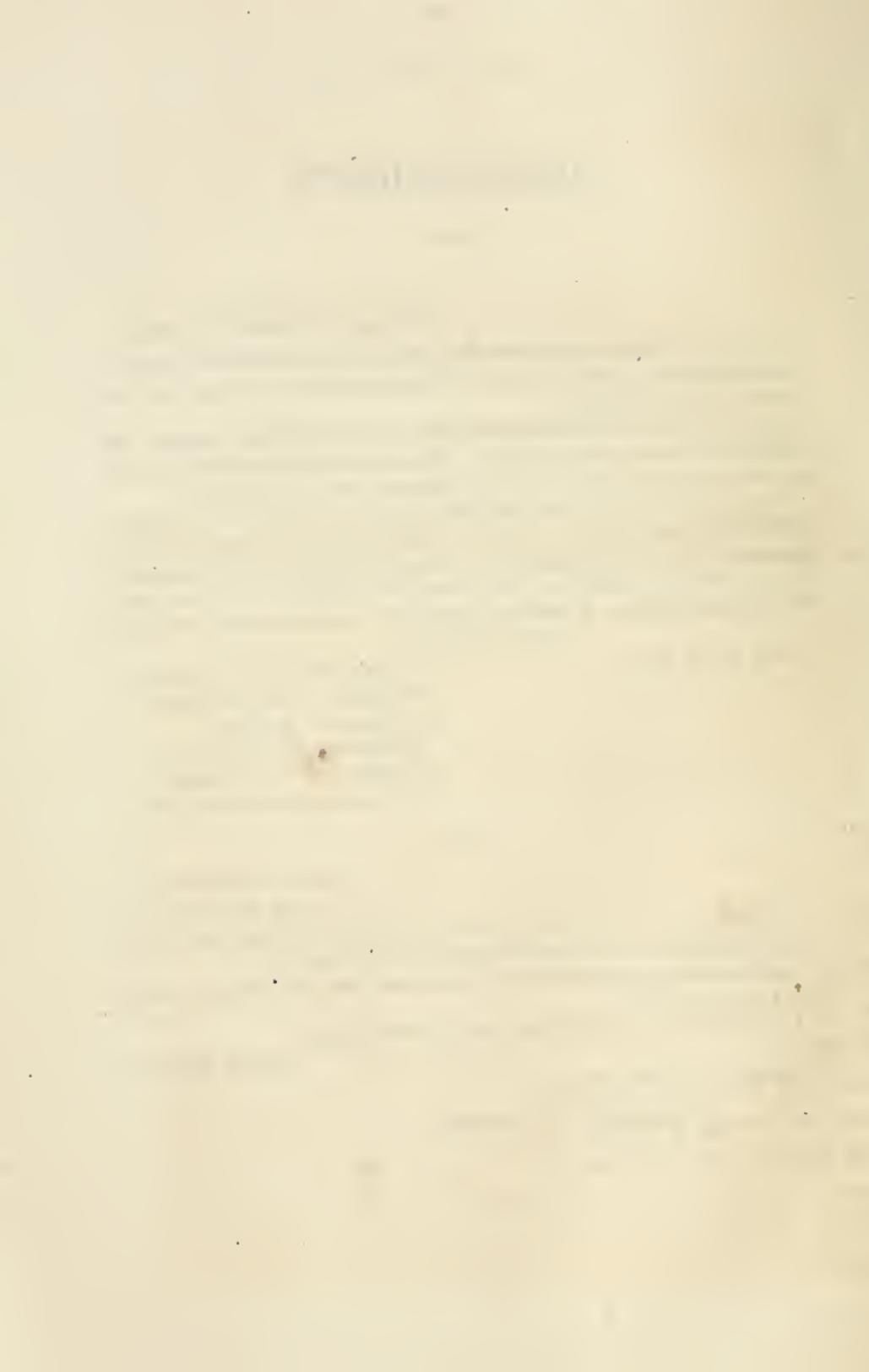
GENTLEMEN :—I have received your very kind note of this date requesting a copy for publication of my sermon delivered before you yesterday.

I most cheerfully comply with your request, and will with pleasure furnish you a copy for the press.

I remain, gentlemen, with great regard faithfully yours,

MASON NOBLE.

Messrs. F. M. HENDRIX, }
R. B. BRADFORD, }
R. WATERMAN, } COMMITTEE.
W. H. FRAILEY, }
J. P. NEWELL, }



S E R M O N .



“For promotion cometh neither from the East nor from the West, nor from the South. But God is the Judge. He putteth down one and setteth up another.”—*Psalm 75* :—6—7.

We are assembled here to-day at the summons of the Government. We gather with a weeping Nation around the body of our late beloved and venerable Chief Magistrate, ABRAHAM LINCOLN! Though the capitol is so many hundred miles away, yet we can as it were, hear the sobs of grief which cannot be suppressed in the immediate presence of that loved form, and can mingle our tears with those of the thousands who crowd the great procession that is winding its way through the still and gloomy streets of our National metropolis. Yes! The dread reality is as vivid to us as to them. None of us can escape from its presence. It surrounds us every moment. It is with us in our busiest hours. It haunts our very dreams; and when we awake to consciousness we hope sometimes that it may be only a dream. But the sad truth soon forces itself again upon us. For it has covered our homes with the symbols of mourning. It has closed up in darkness and comparative silence our shops and stores and places of public resort. It has filled

our streets with anxious and gloomy faces, and our friends as they meet us press our hands in speechless sorrow and turn away to weep alone.

But independent of all these external signs of grief, there is a sense of the terrible calamity in the depth of our hearts which no words can express and no symbols illustrate. I would not intrude upon the sacredness of your sorrow ; and I feel that my own is too deep and solemn to be spoken of to any one but God. To Him we may speak ; and this is the meaning of this hour of worship. The temples of the land are all thrown wide open at this hour, and the Nation is prostrate before the throne of the God of our Fathers. The American people have come with stricken hearts into His presence ; and it is some alleviation to our own anguish to know that while we are here singing our solemn dirges, deprecating His wrath and supplicating His mercies, our brothers in all the loyal States have turned away from their usual employments, and are looking up sadly and hopefully to our common Father in Heaven.

We all feel probably as we have never felt before the awful sovereignty of God. We see clearly that if “ the earth and the inhabitants thereof are not dissolved,” it is because “ He bears up the pillars thereof.” It is no theological dogma with us to-day but a living fact that “ promotion cometh neither from the East, nor from the West, nor from the South. But God is the Judge. He putteth down one and setteth up another.” A week ago to-day how firmly was Abraham Lincoln seated in the very centre of earthly power and glory ; the object of the Nation’s warmest love ; the hope and joy of all the loyal millions of the land. He seemed appointed of God

to bear up the pillars of the Government, and the Nation leaned in full confidence upon his strong arm and manly heart. In a moment the hand of an assassin is permitted to overwhelm him, and another stands in his place, clothed in his power and summoned to his responsibilities. Yes! the hand of man has done it in wrath and hate, but God has permitted it to be done, and the solemn voice which speaks out of Heaven to all of us as we turn our weeping eyes toward his gracious and yet awful throne, is "Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the wicked. I will be exalted in the land."

The *Divine supremacy* is a fact; and that fact made glorious and attractive by all the perfections of Him who reigns over the boundless universe, is and should be the chief source of consolation in the sorrows that to-day overwhelm us. Especially may we remember as we see the head of our National Government so suddenly laid low in death, that

1. *Government itself is ordained of God.*

The State is not so much an institution of man as it is an ordinance of God. As it is not a question with any one of us whether we should be born at all, so we are not permitted to say whether we will be subject to the power of an organized State. We are introduced into its presence at the moment of our birth. It encompasses us on every side with its laws, its high behests, its protection, its unceasing inspection, its obligations and its penalties.

The *form* of the Government, the degree of power which it may wield, and the particular mode of its administration, may all be made dependent on the will of

man. But the *fact* of the State is independent of men, and is ordained of God as directly as the roll of the planets, or the laws of the light, or the balancings of the clouds or the changes of the seasons.

If then, "the wicked bend their bow, and make ready their arrow upon the string that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart," the foundations are not destroyed, nor one pillar of our glorious civil temple torn from its base. The President may die. But "Jehovah is in His holy temple. Jehovah's throne is in Heaven. How say ye to my soul? Flee as a bird to your mountain! In Jehovah put I my trust! The powers that be are ordained of God. Jehovah is then my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Deliverer; my God, my strength in whom I will trust."

But there is another truth which we may well remember in this day of our national bereavement, viz :

2. *God has ordained that civil Governments should grow out of and represent the general character of the governed.*

Our God is a great King who putteth down one and setteth up another. As Governor among the Nations He is governed by certain great principles of justice and right as well as of Divine beneficence. The Bible teaches us that He so orders and controls all events that the heart of the Nation, or its great moral principles, should be fully represented in the State which is ordained and established.

It may be true in one sense that a ruler may give character to the Nation which he governs. But there is a higher and grander truth than this. That omniscient eye which penetrates beneath the mere surface of human

society, sees thoughts, feelings, principles, working there in the depths of men's souls, and actually forming by immutable moral laws the very despot and tyrant who in his time comes up and treads the people down in the dust, or that beneficent and glorious Sovereign who will acknowledge and protect their rights, and raise them to the sublime heights of national honor and happiness.

The despotism of King Saul, rising as it did out of a Divine democracy, was ordained of God; and yet it represented the false views and proud ambition of a people already corrupted from their primitive simplicity, and to whom despotism was a necessity as well as a just punishment. The various modifications of the State under his successors, David and Solomon and Rehoboam, were immediately connected with the character of the people and represented the changes in their views and feelings and conduct. Their rulers came forth by the decree of the most High, and yet they grew out of the soil of the Nation and faithfully represented the Nation in its real character and deserts.

And so it has ever been in the history of States. The world has never been forsaken by its Maker, or left to be the sport of chance, nor its Governments permitted to rise out of chaos with no directing hand or intelligent forming power. God has ever been in the midst of States, illustrating and vindicating great principles of righteousness and truth as well as mercy. No one, indeed, can read history intelligently or profitably, unless he remembers that God is superintending and controlling all, and in the Governments which He ordains, is never departing one iota from the principle of representing the character of the people in the privileges and immunities

which they enjoy, or in the oppressions and sorrows which they endure.

The State may be a bald and heartless despotism ; or a mixture of arbitrary power and wild freedom ; or a great and wise monarchy more jealous of the rights of all than the most unrestricted democracy, or a free and noble Republic where man stands up in his truest dignity and liberty is most strongly guarded by constitutional law. But whatever they are, they are all not so much man's invention as God's ordinance, and that not by arbitrary appointment, but according to eternal and immutable principles of right. States, as well as individuals, are ever reaping what they have sown, eating of the fruit of their own way, and filled with their own services.

In relation to our own Republic, we rejoice to know and acknowledge that in its form and substance it is one of the most precious gifts that God has ever conferred upon any people. But we are certain that in this He has not departed one hair's breadth from those great principles which have ever been illustrated in the history of Nations. We say, and we say truly, that it was Washington and that noble band of self-sacrificing men who surrounded him, who secured to us our political institutions. We can, indeed, follow them step by step, through many anxious and weary years, guiding us by their wise counsels, leading on our discouraged and yet patient army of brave and suffering heroes, and finally establishing our institutions on a solid basis of enduring prosperity and glory. But it is true, also, that such men as these could have been found nowhere else in the world. Such tall, majestic trees, could have grown in no other soil. If the soul of Washington had been brought into

existence in Mexico, or old Spain, or France, or even England itself, his intellectual and moral character would have been very different from what it became in this land. That remarkable man—so pure, so true, so patient, so wise, so exalted in his views, of such gentle dignity among men and so reverent before God, turning with instinctive aversion from oppression in every form, and loving liberty with a calm and strong, if not a passionate, devotion, forgetting to use his power for his own exaltation and laying everything he possessed at the feet of the Nation, prizing the people as the greatest treasure of a State, and assured that by their own intelligence and virtue they might secure all the blessings of good Government—such a man, we say, could have been formed in no other Nation except by a miracle. When these sublime virtues had been concentrated in his person he was then raised up on the heights of power by that God who had determined to represent in him that band of men who were once gathered on the deck of the Mayflower, and whose descendants, through Washington and his co-workers, might give character to the counsels and the deeds that should secure our free institutions and our immortal Republic.

There were, as we all know, defects in their character ; and those defects appear in the State which they organized. The stream will never rise above the fountain ; and political institutions will show the plague-spot on the hands of those who form and administer them.

Our Republic consists practically, not simply of the constitution, but of the administration of the Government. It is a solemn fact which we would this day recognize, that as our Administrations have followed each

other in quick succession for nearly a century, they have represented the real character of the people. The enactments of law and the policy and measures of Government, have been such as the people on the whole demanded. Our public dealing with great moral questions, such as the punishment of crime, the observance of the Sabbath, the treatment of the Aboriginal races of this continent, the manner of regarding the Negro in his bondage, and our habit of considering the claims of justice and of the will of God as supreme over all, our dealing, I say, with these questions in our public counsels, has been such as the people demanded, and to them they have consequently given the sanction of their deliberate approbation.

But why do I dwell on such a topic in the midst of the desolations and sorrows of this day of our National bereavement and lamentation? It is that I may set still more distinctly before you, young gentlemen, the great fact, that

3. *Our late President was a true and conscious Representative of the heart of the American people.*

His character as a statesman was formed by the institutions and prevailing public sentiment of the Nation.

Born in the South, and trained there for a time, he was familiar with their domestic institutions. He knew thoroughly the condition of the slave, and the effects of slavery on those who hold them in bondage. He saw the great, the indescribable evils of the whole system; and was most deeply impressed with the difficulty of removing them.

At the same time, his long residence in the free States had convinced him of the infinite superiority of free

labor, and he felt that these two systems could not co-exist permanently under the same Government. And yet, in common with the vast majority of the American people, he hoped that by mutual forbearance for a time and the honest carrying out of the principles of the Fathers of the Republic freedom would ultimately triumph without war, and that the Nation would remain one and indivisible.

When therefore the Slave Power struck at the life of the Nation and the Providence of God elevated him to the chief Magistracy and committed to his hands the affairs of the Republic in the bloody struggle to which it was summoned his heart beat responsive to the heart of the people.

In the tender and earnest appeal of his first Inaugural Address and his solemn determination to restore every fortress and every inch of territory to the control of the Government, in his reluctant and yet courageous summons to arms when the flag of Fort Sumpter was dishonored by a traitorous and arrogant foe, in his subsequent proclamations, and faithful, firm, sagacious and glorious acts of administration in which he so carefully and conscientiously guarded his steps he knew that he was not leading the people or exciting and goading on a hesitating Nation. He felt rather that he was their servant, and that to him as President the voice of the people was most truly the voice of God. Hence he himself said that he had not controlled events but was controlled by them. The war was not for a moment his war or the war of his administration, or the war of the Republican party. It was the *people's* war for the life of the Nation. Their wisdom, their valor, their zeal, their sacrifices, their sor-

rows, their hopes, their living, fiery, unquenchable patriotism, their immutable and ever intensifying purpose to *save the Nation*, were ever concentrating their power upon him. Under the pressure of such an influence he went forth to his great work, and by such inspiration he accomplished, under God, his glorious success.

Even in his leniency from the beginning towards those in insurrection, in his reluctance to believe in the savage barbarity of their leaders, in his inability to appreciate the cruelty which long habits of oppressing a servile race had made possible if not natural to them, in a deep compassion for the insane delusions which had swept like a tornado over the minds of the masses, and in the benevolent hope that pardon offered to all would result in universal submission and a restored Union, and in an entire freedom from revenge and hate, he truly represented the great heart of the American people.

And finally, when after years of conflict the last terrific campaign came, it was through him that the voice of an united and determined people proclaimed as their ultimatum **PEACE THROUGH VICTORY!** And when he said "war! and war only to the bitter end of rebellion!" he rose only to the height of sublime determination on which the Nation itself finally stood.

And when victory hung out her glorious banners on every side, when stronghold after stronghold fell before the resistless might of the military power, when the capitol of the pretended confederacy was hurled from its bad eminence and the proud army of their commander-in-chief was broken and routed and captured, and sent without arms to their ruined homes, when rebellion was everywhere prostrated, and "mene, mene, tekem, uphar-

sin," was written by the finger of God Himself on the palace wall of the modern Babylon, then what were the emotions of the great soul of our chief? Gentleness, kindness, sympathy for the suffering, forgiveness, union, peace! Not one word of reproach, not a single taunt, not a whisper of revenge, not a desire for one degree of unnecessary sorrow. And in all that too I think he represented the forgiving heart of a great and magnanimous Nation.

But in this, both he and the people were in danger of the most grave error in judgment, and of thus falsely interpreting the providence of God. With few exceptions we seemed in the joy of victory and the anticipations of peace, to be blind to the malignant and deadly spirit of the rebellion, while we failed to recognize the dread claims of justice in the settlement of the Nation on foundations that could endure forever.

But at this point God interposes His awful hand. By a providence as mysterious in some of its aspects as it was terrific and overwhelming, He permits the *insane spirit* of the rebellion to reveal itself to the Nation and to the world. Its satanic form suddenly presents itself in the bloody assassin of the chief magistrate himself. As he falls in death the scales instantly fall from the eyes of the Nation, and Justice, pure as white robed mercy, is seen descending out of Heaven, and though her garments are red as blood, yet the people recognize her as the Messenger of God and the Deliverer of the Land. The cry, the shout, the fearful shout of the people is, Justice! Justice! Justice! And as they cry THE MAN STEPS FORTH. ANDREW JOHNSON IS NOW THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. GOD'S APPOINTED AGENT TO DO HIS WORK.

I tremble as I see him sit down in that high and holy place. My prayer is that his hand may remain firm while his heart is true. My hope is—A NATION ESTABLISHED BY MERCY AND TRUTH MEETING TOGETHER, AND RIGHT-EQUUSNESS AND PEACE KISSING EACH OTHER. Amen.

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