

A SERMON

ON THE

Assassination of Abraham Lincoln,

PREACHED IN THE M. E. CHURCH, PINE BROOK, N. J.

APRIL 23d, 1865.

BY REV. S. J. MORRIS.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

NEWARK, N. J. .
A. STEPHEN HOLBROOK, PRINTER,
No. 3 Mechanic Street.

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J. J. Thatcher

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SERMON.

“And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day : consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds.” JUDGES XIX : 30.

WE are here, my friends, to-day, weeping and mourning. Our hearts are filled with sorrow and sadness, as we are reminded, by these objects which meet our eyes, that the head and chief of our nation is stricken down; and, to our shame, by the hand of the assassin! The nation is sending up its cries of grief, as a mother bereaved of an only child. The churches, homes, vessels, flags—private and public buildings, alike show their silent sorrow, by their hanging emblems of grief. The heart of the nation has been smitten, and is sending up its doleful cry, because of the loss of a good and great man—a man whom we all loved, and whom we had engraven in the secret chambers of our hearts. Abraham Lincoln is murdered! Let us inquire

I. *Who is responsible for it?* To this question, we answer, 1. *Slavery*, or the men of the South.

Slavery has ever been the black spot on our fair escutcheon. It wished to tyrannize over the majority. It lifted its hydra-head against the Government to overthrow it—and that the best government in the world. It prepared its votaries, first by stultifying, and then by brutalizing them. This is the effect of the slave system everywhere; and Mr. Lincoln's assassination is the logical and legitimate terminus of a series



of outrages perpetrated in its behalf. It has debauched the public mind, stultified their affections, and blunted their perceptions, in regard to the barbarities which it involves: and the little surprise which it excites in us now, will, in after ages, fill the mind of the student of history with wonder and amazement, how it was possible, that among the people of a civilized nation they could inflict punishment by burning their fellow-creatures alive, by the mob, in the middle of the nineteenth century, and that the laws of those States allowed private individuals to torture to death's door, and in some cases to death: and that there was a large body among us who were ever ready to defend such laws and such practices, and such atrocities; and, worst of all, that these men should call themselves by the name of the Son of God—Christians. I say, the student of history, in after ages, will be puzzled to know why such things existed.

It is not the political tenets of the rebels which have sprinkled their campaigns with crimes against civilization and humanity; but it is that cursed social system, for which, and by which this wicked and unparalleled rebellion was hatched, Slavery. The outrages and atrocious deeds, over which we have been shuddering for these last four years, have only been the legitimate results of a previous practice. The same things they have committed before, under the protection of their laws. The outrages and violence perpetrated upon the black man, prepared the way for their foul and devilish deeds upon the white man. It knows no limits, and no place was too sacred, where it did not practice its dark deeds. It was this that made the South applaud the act of Mr. Brooks, when he struck down one of the highest officers in the land, in the halls of Congress. It was this same spirit which hung the Rev. Anthony Bewley, by a Texan mob, at Fort Worth; which mobbed Bishop Janes, while holding Conference, at Bonham, Arkansas; which hung two Jerseymen, near Charleston, without trial, *on suspicion* of talking to the slaves about

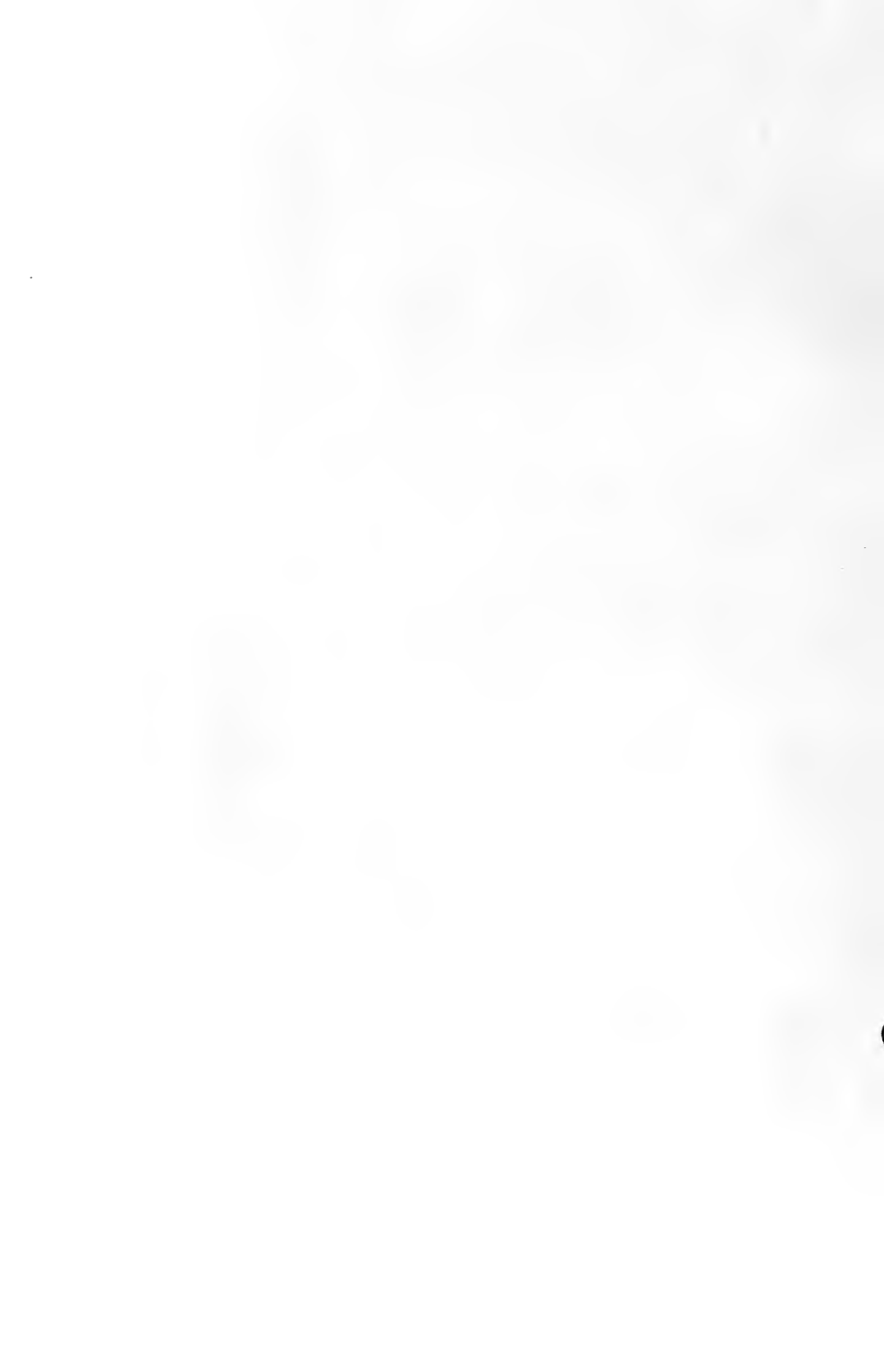


liberty; which murdered Mr. Crawford in Texas. 'Twas this same spirit kindled the fires of civil war, and desolated our fair homes in Kansas: in burning the temple of Almighty God; in stabbing old men and children, and committing crimes on unprotected mothers and daughters, hardly fit to be spoken in ears polite. It inaugurated this bloody war by firing upon Sumpter, and has perpetrated horrors unparalleled in the history of civilized warfare. It murdered wounded men, desecrated their dead bodies, and manufactured rings and drinking cups out of the bones and skulls of Union soldiers, and Southern women wore these manufactured ornaments upon their persons, and one of these females said "She would be willing to go to hell if she could shoot a Yankee first;" another, hoped to sleep under a blanket made of the scalps of Northerners. This spirit of slavery massacred our soldiers in cold blood. Its government has starved by degrees, and in manners too horrible to relate, about 60,000 of our brothers, and did it systematically. (See the testimony taken before the Committee appointed by our Government to investigate the matter, and published by U. S. Sanitary Commission.)

We ask, what could have made them so insensible to the sufferings and miseries of their fellow men? And there is but one answer: *they were educated in Slavery*. Its spirit has been demonstrated everywhere; so that, had we eyes we could see it, ears we could hear it, hearts we could feel it. It has committed piracies on the high seas; it has mined its prisons, with the intention of blowing them up, in case of a probability of our soldiers being released; it has robbed our banks; shot down our innocent children in the streets; attempted to burn our cities; murder our shopkeepers; plunder our villages; upset our passenger trains; and has committed every crime in the catalogue, culminating in the assassination of the President; it has legalized adultery; destroyed the marital, social, civil and parental rights; and attempted to father this

spawn of hell upon our heavenly Father, by making it a divine institution, and trying to prove the same by holy writ. Slavery has prepared them for all these things, by stultifying and brutalizing their faculties and affections, until they have become the personification of the devil: nay, actual fiends. It makes them villains of the deepest dye. But, furthermore,

2. They have *aiders* and *abettors*. They are not alone. They have been helped, in this matter, by men and women North, who, for political purposes, sympathized with them. They aided and abetted them, by withholding from the Government that support it needed. They are called "peace men," but are arrant traitors—snakes in the grass, who have rejoiced at our loss and the rebels' gain; who have maltreated our soldiers; incited riots in our cities, and talked foul-mouthed treason, until an honest man's cheek would burn with shame: who have forbidden, either directly, or indirectly, their ministers to open their mouths against this great national crime, because they understood it to mean politics, and would withhold their support from the minister; who have openly expressed themselves, in prayers, wishes, or otherwise, wishing that Mr. Lincoln was killed; that he might be hung or shot. Now they have their wishes and prayers answered. They have talked treason, and arson and murder, until it is accomplished; and history will record this fact, that men of the North, enjoying the blessings and immunities of the Government, plotted to overthrow it in favor of such a system as we have described, and were *aiders* and *abettors* of those villains who inaugurated a civil war, full of deeds too horrible to relate, and which ended in the murder of the Chief Magistrate. And now it is done, they stand aghast, and wonder at the result of their own wickedness. The men who have been quietly protected in their homes and possessions, and yet have been treasonable, are worse, ten-fold, than Southern rebels. They have no right to be protected here; they should go South, where their hearts are, and sympathy too. There is



some kind of honor attached to an open foe: but one who pretends friendship, while at heart he is a bitter enemy, like Judas betrays you with a kiss, while he sells you for the silver, merits everlasting contempt.

3. *Look at the character of their victim.* There was nothing there but transparent honesty and truth. Born in obscurity, in a small village called Hodgenville, Kentucky, February 12, 1809. In relation to his ancestors we know little: neither is it of any importance, at this juncture. He lived to build, not boast, a generous race, and dies, regretted by the nation, as a great and good man. He has been a wise and faithful President. He will live in the memory of the people, and in history his name will go down to following generations as a synonym of greatness, honesty and truth. As to his political views, we do not care now to touch. Suffice it to say, he was a great man. God fitted him for his great and peculiar work. He had a well-balanced mind, which enabled him to render an almost infallible judgment. He was always equal to the emergency, and withal so logical, that his opponents, when they would listen carefully and thoughtfully to his views, were struck with their logical directness. He had not that parade of words, neither that indirectness to reach a conclusion and make himself understood, that some men have. He had such an honest heart, that he earned for himself, amidst the corruptions of the land, the enviable name of "Honest Abraham." The man was incorruptible, and all the twistings and turnings of his political advisers, on either side, were not able to turn him from his purpose. He loved honesty and truth for their own sake, and it was because of these two things the people trusted him, and gave more power into his hands than they had into the hands of any other man since the nation was born.

He was a man of integrity. In Independence Hall, Philadelphia, he exhibited that integrity which is the peculiar glory of all good men. Said he,—when speaking of that sen-



ment in the Declaration of Independence which speaks of liberty,—“If the country cannot be saved without giving up that principle, I would rather be assassinated on this spot, than surrender it.” And that, “he had said nothing which he was not willing to live by, and if it pleased Almighty God, to die by.”

He had a great mind; for the proof of which we need only refer to the past five years, for facts. Every act was stamped with intellectual greatness. He, after announcing his views, educated the people to believe with him, harmonized their difficulties and differences, and brought the strength of the nation, firm and compact, to support those views, by overwhelming majorities. While there was such intellectual greatness about the man, there was also such a simplicity. Unlike George Washington, he had not that stiff Roman dignity about him, that none could approach him. The child, the widow, the private soldier, friend and foe, all alike found access to him. His ear was ever ready to hear their complaints, redress their wrongs, or assuage their griefs. He was thoroughly American, “with malice for none, and charity for all;” he lived, judging others by his own honest heart. Unsuspicious of the dark and villainous plot they laid for him, he went without a guard, and bade his assassin good evening, as he saw him on the side-walk, on the same night he was shot.

He was a merciful man—more so than the father of his country. Washington would not forgive either Andre or Arnold, but had them punished. But Abraham Lincoln, when the rebel General Lee was in his power, and some said hang him, said, “he is our brother.”

He lived to see his principles take deep root, and his policy approved by the nation. He advocated the emancipation from slavery of individuals made in the image of God. The nation was hardly prepared for the proclamation which liberated four millions of slaves, but he soon brought the nation to see the

wisdom of it, and the people gave him credit for it. He was raised up, like Moses of old, to bring them out of bondage. There was a great struggle for it. Every house, like Egypt, was filled with mourning: we have passed through the "Red Sea" of blood; and, like Moses, he was permitted from Pisgah's top of anticipation, to view the goodly land, divested of its blackened crime; and, like him, he was not permitted to enjoy it, for God took him. And as the children of Israel wept for Moses thirty days, so we wear our mourning for the same number of days.

He was a Christian. He was brought to the knowledge of God as his Saviour, before he died. At the death of his son, he was convinced of sin, and after the battle of Gettysburg he told his pastor, Mr. Gurley, he had found the Saviour and was a changed man. He was a great statesman, and was so because he relied upon the divine guidance; and, unlike other men who have been called to fill important offices of trust and responsibility, he was simple enough, honest and thoughtful enough, and religious enough, when parting with a concourse of friends, at Chicago, to ask them, out of the honesty of his great heart, to "pray for him:" and what people heartier, and more zealously complied with his request, than the loyal people of this land? God, in Heaven, heard their prayers. Said he to a number of clergymen who waited upon him in the darkest hour of the conflict, when they were discouraged, "I trust in Divine guidance." Such was the man who died a martyr to the cause of human liberty. Washington was the *father* of his country, but he was the saviour of it, and "he died to set men free." His name will be sweet perfume to the history of his country. He was a pattern for all our statesmen to follow.

"He bore his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
The deep damnation of his taking off."

II. *What will the result be?*

1. The people will love the Government more. It belongs to them, and they see how their enemies have tried to rob them of it. It gives them their liberty. Men in the old world have thought they could not live without a King or Emperor, and if either should die their Government was gone. Not so with us. Our Government is founded on just principles, giving all their rights and privileges, and liberty. It is in the people, and not in the aristocracy or in despotism. They have stood by it in civil war, such as no land ever witnessed, and it has not failed them: and they love it better to-day than ever, and their affection will become stronger. They will see that these villains wished to usurp the powers of the land, and establish in its place a system which would murder liberty and the hopes of the world. The people have seen the Government attacked, or rather the principles of liberty—their President assassinated; and they have given freely of their lives, and blood, and money, for its support: and will they forsake it now? Heaven forbid! Their hearts to-day burn with purer patriotism; they are willing to do and dare. Mothers, and fathers, and brothers, and lovers, throw themselves into the breach, and say, by their acts, that the villainous deeds of those traitors shall never succeed.

It is hard to overcome a people struggling for an object they dearly love, and for which they have given husbands, brothers, lovers, and children. No! no! the people will love the country more, since they see the deep laid plot to rob them of their dearest rights. The cause of liberty is graven deeper in the hearts of the people than ever. They suffer, but what will not people do for an object they love? That will be one result.

2. *Another result will be, it will be a stronger Government.* What is stronger than love? The people will become more compact; their very love will make them strong. Christianity teaches the true principles of democracy. All men are

brothers. Whatever theory goes on any other basis, is subversive of human rights. This idea has been developed in this great struggle, and for advocating which our President has been martyred. His blood will be as seed, broadcast all over the land, and millions will raise the standard for freedom: freedom belongs to humanity. We have passed through oceans of blood, and the surges have passed all over the land. The general Government has demonstrated its own existence, its power; and the idea of the sovereign rights of States, is at last exploded. Those who thought that our Government was only a rope of sand, have learned that it is a band of steel—that it has power, and that it is supreme. The predictions of the wise men of the old world have proved to be utterly false; and the ship of State they said would go down the first civil storm, still rides gloriously above the crested billows. President Lincoln has, by the blessing of God, been enabled to guide her straight, and each successive victory has only added strength to her bulwarks: and now the darkness of the storm is passing away, her banner is still seen flying at the mast-head. The dear old flag still floats, and will float all over the land, as the precious emblem of our cherished rights and liberties. It waves over Sumter to-day, where it was first shot down by rebel guns. May it ever wave.

“O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.”

3. *The people will watch more jealously the institutions and liberties of our country.* Treason will not be allowed, in the future, to hatch another rebellion. It will be dealt with prematurely, before it can assume any large proportions. Its minions will not be allowed to flaunt its badges again in the face of the Government, and every one who has had sympathy with the rebellion, will, in the future, be treated as the tories were after the revolution. They will be as stench in the nostrils of loyal men. The sifting time is coming. Our men who have so gloriously fought our battles, and shed their

noble and heroic blood for our liberties, will bequeath to their children a spirit of jealousy for those rights their fathers fought and died for, which will be manifested against all treason, everywhere. The blood spilt, lives lost, homes desolated, will tend to make the people jealous, and the national debt will remind them every year, by their taxes, what they have to pay for treason.

4. *As a nation we shall be led to trust more in God.* We see how vain is the help of man, and we have realized the truth of God's word, which says "cursed is he that trusteth in the arm of flesh." If God be for us, he is more than all they against us. Have we not boasted too much in the past, and shut God out of the question? and has he not shown us our weakness, our vanity? and do we not feel humbled before him? and is not our hearts turning to him in confidence, asking his guidance and blessing? "In God is our trust," should not only be a sentiment, but should be practised. We loved our lamented President, because he was so good and faithful, and he was so, for he trusted in God for guidance. Let us so trust, and realize that in the arm of Jehovah is everlasting strength. My dear friends, let us thank God and take courage. Let us remember that though the assassin and his accomplices may escape justice in this world, that God lives and ruleth over the kingdoms of the world, and that he has said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." He was the God of our fathers, let us make him our God, and ask him to be our guide even until death.



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