

THE
ASSASSINATION
OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN:
A DISCOURSE.

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ASSASSINATION
OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN:

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN THE STATE ST. PRES. CHURCH,

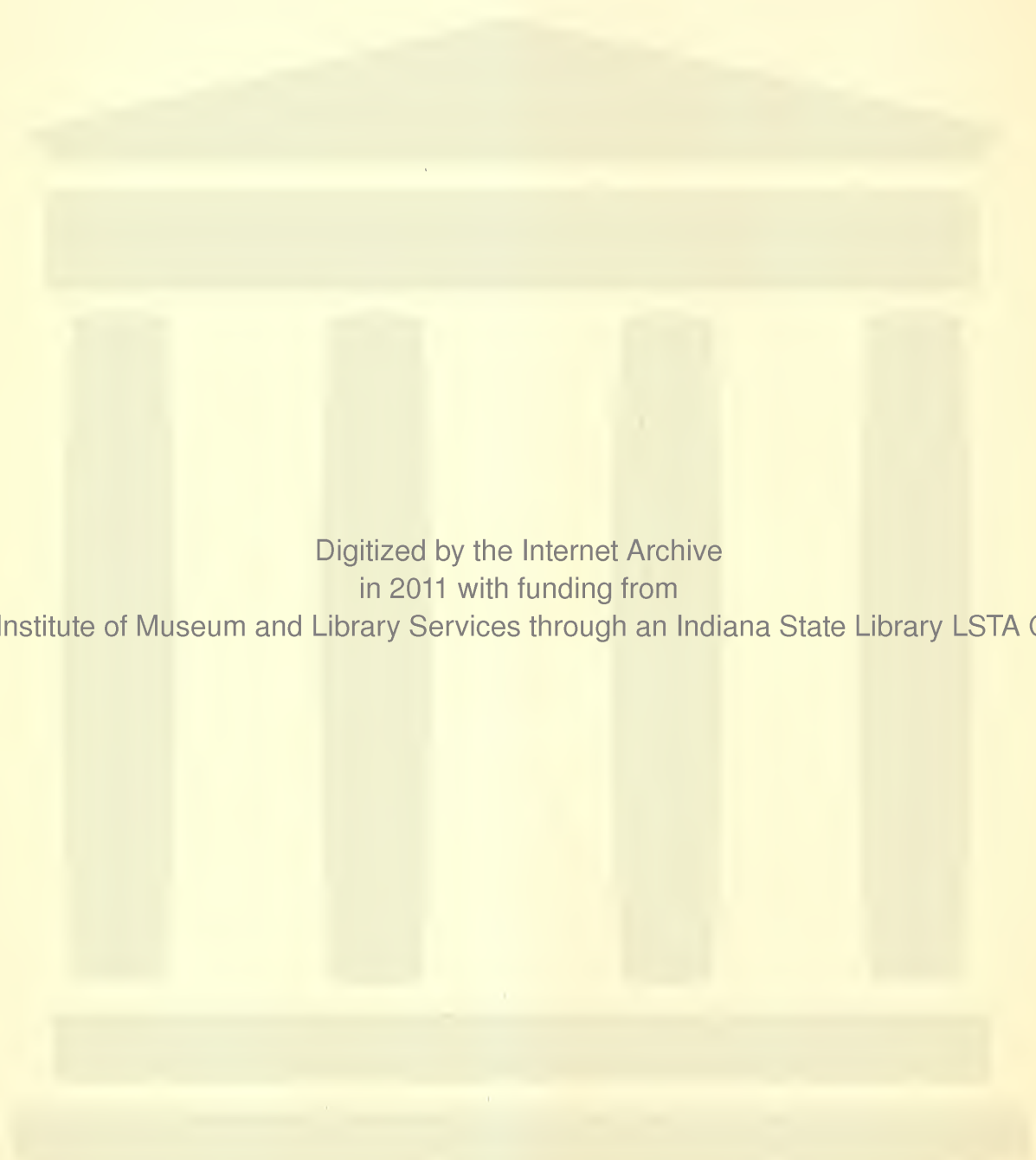
BY

REV. A. S. TWOMBLY,

SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 16, 1865.



ALBANY, N. Y.:
J. MUNSELL, 78 STATE STREET.
1865.



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ALBANY, N. Y., APRIL 17, 1865.

REV. ALEXANDER S. TWOMBLY:

Dear Pastor: Having listened with the deepest interest to your touching tribute of yesterday, to the memory of our beloved and honored President, and believing that the eminently Christian views therein expressed, should have a wide circulation and lasting remembrance, we would respectfully request that you furnish us with a copy for publication.

Believe us, very truly, your Friends,

THOMAS OLCOTT,	J. M. HORTON,
ROBERT L. JOHNSON,	JAMES ERWIN,
CHARLES H. STRONG,	W. S. WINNE,
JAMES H. McCLURE,	JESSE BUEL,
WILLIAM J. WHITE,	W. B. CHURCH,
EDWARD P. WATERBURY,	C. H. ANTHONY,
ERNEST J. MILLER,	S. MUNSON,
ARCH'D M. GIBSON,	OTIS CHURCHILL,
CHAS. E. JUDSON,	A. S. WYGANT,
WALTER R. BUSH,	A. McC. BUSH,
ARTHUR BOTT,	J. A. WHITNEY,
JOSEPH L. SNOW,	J. WHITEHEAD,
JOHN C. McCLURE,	T. LAMOUR, Jr.,
I. P. S. BRIANT,	WALTER R. BUSH, Jr.,
H. D. LEONARD,	W. S. WHITNEY,
H. L. DICKERMAN,	PHILIP SPENCER,
E. DICKERMAN,	JACOB VAN DERZEE,

EDGAR COTRELL,
W. G. SNOW,
D. W. HULL,
S. H. MORGAN,
E. SLOAN,
J. J. AUSTIN, JR.,
A. WING,
H. B. WILDMAN,
C. S. CUTLER,
J. H. RICE,
JOSEPH GAVIT,

W. J. BLACKALL,
J. KINNEAR,
W. H. MALCOLM,
GEO. H. KNOWLTON,
SAMUEL PAUL,
SOLOMON LUKE,
W. M. BROCKWAY,
E. M. CARPENTER,
JAS. VAN SANTVOORD,
RUSSELL LYMAN,
JAMES E. McCLURE.

ALBANY, APRIL 17, 1865.

To Messrs. OLCOTT, JOHNSON, STRONG, McCLURE, and others:

Gentlemen: Enclosing the manuscript for which you ask, I can only hope and pray that all you say concerning it may prove true.

Sincerely Yours,

A. S. TWOMBLY.

S E R M O N .

PSALM lxi, 1, 2, 3.

“ Hear my cry, O God ; attend unto my prayer. “ *** When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.”

To day our nation is in tears ! But yesterday, the land was filled with shouts of joy ; to-day deep sorrow is in every heart !

Within this temple, droop the emblems of distress beneath our country’s flag, instead of the uplifting of triumphant songs !

Like a pall, dismay is resting upon every soul, and consternation written upon every face.

This day, commemorative to so many of the resurrection, wears nothing now but the mementoes of the grave. The cry of anguish and the solemn dirge alone, are on this Easter Sabbath in keeping with the measured throbbings of the nation’s heart.

Death, striking at one life, has stricken all ! The murderer’s hand, red with the blood of our Chief Magistrate, reeks also with the heart-drops of each loyal citizen ! In that one death-stroke we all are smitten to the earth, far more dismayed and prostrate in surviving, than he who by it, lies before us bleeding, crushed and dead !

He has departed; ever after this to live among the noblest names of the heroic dead! We remain, but scarce alive for desolation and dismay. At the summit of his greatness; before an inadvertence or an error has diminished the lustre of deeds no error could efface; at the very height and pinnacle of fame; just at the turning point of national victory and glory, due in such large measure unto him, and with his last public words and acts like Everett's those of forgiveness and conciliation, he has departed ever more to be enshrined, the father next to Washington of his country; its saviour from oppression; its beloved leader in the hour of bitterest distress!

For him, therefore, we cannot mourn! His memory now becomes a precious legacy, to bequeath in fragrant words, to generations yet unborn.

His homely proverbs even, which, had he lived, might have been lost in some mistake to come, will now be treasured as the watchwords of the free! And at his grave, or by his mighty monument will many an eye, not only of our land, but other lands, trace out with moistened lid the living record of his grand career!

Methinks I see, not many years beyond, this day of death and gloom, now seized upon by darkness, with no joyful voice therein, become the star-day of the century for joy. Not that this accursed murder will ever reverse the present twilight of the nation's heart; but chosen as it will be, the anniversary of

what we lose in him we love, the stars shall sing above it, and the dawning of its light shall give the wondering people joy!

The dusky sons of Africa shall come to honor their deliverer from bondage. The land shall ring with glad acclaim, and to the plaudits of a generous republic all the world shall say, Amen!

Why weep then for the dead! Over these wounds now do I prophesy a name and memory for the departed, worth the purchase of a life devoted to his country; all the more immortal, because surmounted and completed by the martyr's crown!

But for ourselves, well may our hearts be sad!

Like the loss of pilot when the storm begins to slacken, though the port is not yet made; like the plumed crest of leader, cut down in the fray just as the rays of coming triumph gild and make it instinct with new power; like loving hands unnerved and lifeless just upon the point of giving forth a rich bequest, this nation loses him, whose hand was ever steady at the helm, though angry billows threatened to engulf; whose crested helmet never bowed to cowardly or vacillating purpose, and whose heart was true till death to its intent to make this people wholly free.

Therefore, what the nation loses, every citizen has lost! Not only is the nascent and emergent might of this republic, on the eve of large events, without its proper head and guide, but you and I, my hearers, have one man less, whom we might call a friend!

Thus is the sorrow of this hour not national alone, but personal and individual.

You should have heard as I did, when this news was broken to a wakened household, how the shock fell like a personal bereavement, upon one whose friend had been befriended in an hour of sorrow, by the hand now cold in death! And what was true in one, was true in every family, and they are countless through the land, whom acts of kindness by our late chief magistrate had endeared to him, as only such acts, springing from a pure benevolence, can endear!

This grief, my hearers, now depicted upon every face, cannot then be merely sorrow over the indignity and insult offered to our nation in the person of its highest Representative. This indignation, flashing from your moistened eyes whose big round tears standing in them, only serve to magnify, instead of quenching out the flame, is not mere indignation against the assassin, as one leading the rebellion to this cruel issue; but it is a strong cry for Justice, from each heart, stabbed in its tender sympathies, and outraged in its own precious loves, by this most wanton crime!

You loved this man, my hearers, though perhaps you knew it not until this day. When first he was placed over us, we saw no comeliness or cause of love in him. He was, by no means, this Republic's beau-ideal of one who should embody its ideas of liberty, courtesy or progress; but as we have from day to day, through all

these critical emergencies, beheld that calm, good, generous heart: as we have seen, in spite of many eccentricities and errors, that shrewd, benevolent, unconsciously heroic man, standing guard over our liberties, imperilling his life, and what was dearer to him his good name; the same uncompromising foe to evil and injustice: the same unswerving friend to truth, religion, equity, you and I have learned to love him, have we not? And forgetful of what he might be in many things, have thought of him, and now remember him as something gentle, noble, great.

Our friend; our brother; our beloved helper in this mighty struggle against wrong! Thus has his lamented end at least, glorified and endeared his memory: not with fictitious honors, but by bringing into bold relief that secret something in his honest heart, which now sets every tearful fountain open, as we meditate upon its life-blood, shed instead of ours; a crimson price willingly paid that we might live in happiness and peace.

It is a costly shedding, truly, for the murderer, and those whose hands have indirectly sped the fatal bolt! We may not charge home this detestable iniquity, full upon rebel leaders and their subordinates in authority.

Well may their crimes already perpetrated in the name of insurrection and disunion, be all that they can bear; and yet what is this cruel murder but the natural and fell culmination of their greater crime? What is the rank and dreadful smell of this foul deed,

but noisome smoke, detestable to heaven, from the not yet extinguished embers of a confederacy, despairing, reckless and abominable? We may not lay this one crime to their charge; and could our great, illustrious deed have opened his pale lips but once more before he died, would not his dying words have plead with those around him, not to allow his killing to undo the ministry of reconciliation, which he had so gloriously begun!

We may not then, as patriots, or Christians suffer this event to swerve us as a nation, from the course of high, magnanimous and holy restoration, marked out for us by the finger that can trace no more the lines of clemency and pardon.

By the memory of Washington, which rises at this juncture to entreat for mercy; and by the recollection of the still palpitating tenderness of that other silent heart, from which the vital stream has but just oozed away, let us here, in presence of the yet unburied dead, abjure the curse that rises to the lip; and drown, in the devotions and solemnities of this affecting hour, all utterances of vengeance, all mutterings of hate.

Let none who bear the Christian name, for whom Christ offered up his life, and who mayhap, were almost partners in the very sin that crucified the Lord; let none who would be patriots of truest loyalty and holiest type, shake in the face of a still struggling foe, that emblem of infernal threatening, their own red

flag, re-reddened in the blood of him whom this rebellion slays. For it is God's great sacrifice to liberty, not ours! He will repay; for unto Him all vengeance is!

But there is one thing, mightier than hate, and sweeter than revenge; it even overtops forgiveness, when, as in a case like this, there is no place for unconditional return and pardon; and that is, GUARANTY FOREVER AGAINST INSURRECTION AND THE HORRID PACK OF CRIMES THAT EVER MUST HOUND AFTER IT, IN FULL BAY AGAINST GOD AND MAN.

Guaranty forever, for our children and our children's children, against the unkenneling again of rapine and brutality and lawless oligarchy, such as it would seem this earth could never bear again without an earthquake, or God look down upon, without a day of judgment close at hand!

Aye, plucked from these gory ruins of the noblest man (no Cæsar either), that our times have known, let there come forth such hatred of domestic treason; such curses upon all oppressive systems, whether they enslave the white man or the black; and such extermination of all possible resistance to authority like ours, that here, in God's name, signed in this blood and witnessed in these tears, Adversity shall prove to be Salvation, and Jehovah's watch and care be seen, even in this cruel issue brought upon us by these bloody men! Oh hear our cry, Thou God of Justice and of Mercy!

From the whole earth, our cry is unto Thee, that Thou wilt build Thy tower of refuge for all nations, on this spot made sacred by the Martyr's blood! Here where our standard-bearer falls, let us take up the banners of Omnipotence, inscribed with thine own guaranty of Union, permanent and bloodless; oppression of the limb or conscience never more; and Righteousness with liberty established and supreme! We would quench out all hate, even in this last bloodshed — but with the pen dipped in this sacrificial blood, we pray Thee, write for us a destiny that cannot be imperilled by the lust of men.

While overwhelmed at heart, do Thou attend our prayer, and be our shelter and our tower!

Beloved friends! I thought not to speak thus, when, in the mournful gloom of yesterday, I caught the wailing of my countrymen, to prolong their echoes into these still Sabbath hours, which God especially employs for sanctifying our bereavements, and perpetuating the impressions of his Providential dealings with our souls. Let our attention therefore turn from the unhappy present, even for a moment, from the duties laid upon us by this sudden sorrow, to consider what God's tide is bringing in upon our nation, as heralded in this event.

Waves rolling over us for four long years, have not destroyed, thank God, our trust in Him.

Our hearts were many times, in that sad period, overwhelmed, and yet last week we stood once more,

we thought, upon the rock! And are we not likewise to day still standing there, in spite of this dread wave of wrath, dashed like the raging surf from angry ocean over us and clear beyond us, to the very end of the whole earth; But perhaps God saw that safety from the storm would make us too over confident of our security! Perhaps God's eye was watching while his providence was bringing in upon us, another billowy sea from the far off horizon, and to save us from destruction then, lets us to-day be drenched in bitter tears of grief; teaching us to cling to him more firmly; overwhelming us in gloom and trepidation for the moment, that as a nation we may not hazard our affairs and fortunes ere the storm be wholly past.

It is indeed a lesson of the storm! It is as if the whirlwind spirit of rebellion, having nearly spent its strength, and having almost wrecked the ship of state, were flinging now upon the creaking but uninjured timbers of this republic, a redoubled fury, to destroy if possible our timbers, and to strain apart the beams and planks which before it could not crush. But it is God's own sending! We had nailed the flag aloft before His time. Before our country was afloat, our booming cannon had exulted in the victory—and well they might, had we remembered that the danger was not over! but to this remembrance the Almighty is now calling us: to the lookout he bids us climb again; to shot our guns for warfare, rather than for premature

forgetfulness of danger, he now loudly issues his command!

Let us then hear his voice, and gird ourselves to meet our coming duty conscientiously and manfully! Let the labor which our fallen leader has begun, be in our hands completely and well done!

Let this mourning nation, in the weeds of its distress, prepare for a persistent and unflinching resistance to unrighteousness of every form.

Made sensible to-day of the solemnity of life; brought from the festive glare of a triumphant jubilee, in one short week into the presence of the gory corpse of him, in whom that nationality which we thought safe was vested; being in an instant as it were, lifted from the highest pinnacle of happiness, to be dashed to deepest melancholy, who does not in such an hour, feel the Almighty's hand, and the Almighty's power? Who then can for a moment, fail to feel that all our future is with him? who, in this solemn crisis, will not pray that the Omnipotent Jehovah will shelter and support this nation as his own? He heralds movements of his mercy, even in this event, which now appears so ominous!

Hidden under the assassin's steel, was some divine message, warning and instruction for this, as yet, not fully ripened people.

He, in this event, makes us remember Him, that we may put our trust implicitly above! For God designs

to make of us a nation for his praise and the extension of his name. He treats us in this solemn chastisement, as he has in all the rest, that like the other nations by whom he has worked out the progress of the Christian faith and pure ideas, in centuries now past — we too may do his will; Even Israel, his chosen, had no Moses for her entrance to the promised land; God saw 'twere best that she should rather venerate the memory of Moses dead, than disobey and thwart him living. Therefore Moses heard but the shouts of those whom he had led to Canaan's border, and was buried, with his eyes just resting on the glorious land to which another was to lead the tribes.

It cannot for a moment be supposed that God prevented Moses from completing his great work, solely as a punishment for his one delinquency. Was it not rather to give the blessing of his glorious memory, and to augment the power of his word, that this great wonder-worker simply saw the land and died?

So too upon the pages of more modern times, the glorious William of the Dutch Republic (one, in many aspects, like our own lamented dead) was suffered by Almighty God to fall, just on the threshold of success, that in the days and years that followed his assassination, a far mightier destiny might be wrought of God for his beloved land.

Already were there signs of some hostility to his policy among his friends; signs that might have after-

ward convulsed the new Republic in a civil war, instead of leaving them united against a common foe without.

But dying, William the Silent's name, under God, became a tower of strength; the rallying cry of a beleaguered people; their grand beacon, lighting them down through the coming century to a glorious end.

And who knows but in this sad disaster which to-day drapes every loyal heart in gloom, God meaneth good?

We may not say that we can see the blessing to arise from this unmitigated semblance of disaster.

No human mind dare say that Abraham Lincoln dead, will surely prove a host, instead of but a single voice and arm! And yet the strange analogies of history, together with the gracious benedictions which have been already shed upon us from on high, reveal at least a source of consolation, upon which we may lay hold.

This surely we may know, that if this nation shall be driven nearer to Jehovah by this dire calamity; if in still more losses, should more lives such as our honored Secretary whom the nation could ill spare, be sacrificed, we are made to rest on God instead of man, who will deny the mercy of the Lord in this appalling and atrocious culmination of the fury so long loose in our beloved land.

Behold then, light behind the cloud! Even in this

darkness, which as a cloud somewhat obscures Jehovah from us, as from our enemies, He may be a pillar of destruction unto them, and light to us!

We can but cry to Him, and let our agonized petitions rise, for shelter and support.

Comfort ye, therefore, one another with these words.

For if there be any comfort, while all who see this murder say, "There has been no such thing done or seen, unto this day"—if it be possible to mitigate this dreadful spectacle of the days of Robespierre and Philip the Second, transferred to our own century and shore—if in any sense, there can be a cessation of our natural grief in losing one we had so fully learned to love, then let sorrow now give way to trust—let the clouds part that we may see God sitting in supreme, unchanging love and power, our refuge and our friend.

Lift up the eyes to him this day! Perchance this nation, upon bended knee, in sackcloth and in ashes, may yet keep another day not very distant, of thanksgiving, prayer and praise! Let our late President's announcement, that a day for giving God the praise would soon be set apart, hallow the day already appointed by our Governor as a day of prayer; and though that dead hand which has so often given days of worship to this people, will not sign the proclamation, though the lips which have so lately said,

“Oh yes, I love the Saviour,”¹ will not join in prayer or praise, yet when this people comes together, will it not be with his spirit hovering near; with influences from his pure leadership to guide, as we cry mightily to God to hear and help! And do Thou, mighty God, attend our prayer! When hearts are overwhelmed, like ours, in this sad day of darkness, be Thou alone our Shelter, and our Tower! Amen!

¹ CONVERSION OF THE PRESIDENT.—Rev. J. E. Casey, of Freeport, Ill., makes the following statement:—

A gentleman, having recently visited Washington on business with the President, was, on leaving home, requested by a friend to ask Mr. Lincoln whether he loved Jesus. The President buried his face in his handkerchief, turned and said: “When I left home to take the chair of State I requested my countrymen to pray for me; I was not then 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 our dead heroes, who had fallen in defence of their country, I then and there consecrated myself to Christ. I do love Jesus.”

