



Lincoln-an Inspiration.

A DISCOURSE

By Rabbi JOSEPH KRAUSKOPF, D. D.



Series XVIII. No. 14

TEMPLE KENESETH ISRAEL,

Broad St. above Columbia Aye.

PHILADELPHIA.

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Lincoln—an Inspiration.

A DISCOURSE, AT TEMPLE KENESETH ISRAEL,

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RABBI JOSEPH KRAUSKOPF, D. D.

Philadelphia, February 12th, 1905.

SCRIFTURAL LESSON: I SAMUEL, Chapter XVI, 1-13. TEXT: "Who shall stand in the holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart." PSALM XXIV, 3-4.

Mr. William Roscoe Thayer contributes to the current number of the North American Review a scholarly article, entitled : BIOGRAPHY. In it he sets forth that The worth of biography as a branch of history is little culti- hieroraphy. vated, and that of good biographies we have but He tells us that, if Plutarch's LIVES had been lost, few. we would have been deprived of knowledge such as neither Thucydides nor Livy nor Tacitus could ever supply. He attributes the never-weakening hold of the Old Testament on civilized society not so much to its religious as to its biographical teaching. Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Saul, David, and others, are drawn, he says, with such unsurpassed fidelity that a child recognizes the life-likeness, and a philosopher wonders at the perfection with which they typify phases of universal human nature. He shows that the nineteenth century produced LIVES as great as any that lived in times past, and some types greater than any that had ever been recorded before, but they have largely escaped us because of our disregard of biography as one of the most important branches of knowledge. In this age of science, he says, it is the mass or the class that holds our attention; of the individual little account is taken. "The career of a tribe, a nation, a race; the growth and decay of institutions; the birth and flowering and death of religions, philosophies, politics, arts; the mystic importance of the soil out of which all springs, and of the climate which each must breathe-these are the topics," he says, "which have chiefly engrossed historians during the past fifty years." The conclusion arrived at is that man's highest interest is in his fellowman, and that the knowledge of other men's lives is the secret of knowing how best to live one's own.

I wish that educators and parents might read that article, and be inspired by it to attach greater importance to biography Its study should be than they have hitherto in the training of those who are entrusted to their care. And I wish that obligatory in all schools. the Nation would make a study of the lives of its

great and good men and women obligatory in all its schools, to assure itself thereby of a nobler type of manhood and of a higher grade of citizenship. I believe that one of the curses of our age is to be found in the preponderating publication by our press of what is vicious and criminal, in the conspicuous exhibition of ignoble types of character, of corrupt politicians, of apathetic citizens, of scoundrelism in high life and low life. The constant sight and sound of these evils, unneutralized by an occasional dipping into the lives of the Nation's noblest heroes and martyrs, diseases our moral nature, as the constant in-breathing of noxious gases poisons our physical health. Unconsciously, a belief implants itself that all are grasping and self-seeking, that all set their own gain above that of the state-that no one is capable of self-sacrifice for his country's good, and that, when all politicians are dishonest and all citizens apathetic, no one but a fool will be houest if in office, and no one but an idler will bother himself about national or municipal affairs, if out of office.

It is to this absence of noble types of patriots as exemplars by which to guide our political lives, it is to this want of hero-

Its neglect accounts for neglect day.

worship which manifests itself best in love of biography, that I attribute the little importance of Lincoln's birth- that is attached to this day, which is known in our national calendar as Lincoln's Birthday.

What if Lincoln had lived in ancient days, and had performed his valorous deeds and had suffered martyrdom in Biblical times! What a joyous religious festival we would What if Lincoln had have celebrated to-day! How the church-bells been a Biblical character? would have summoned the people to their respective place of worship! How the sacred edifices would have

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been garlanded and festooned in honor of the patriot, hero and martyr! How the pulpits would have waxed eloquent in their recitals of his heroic and beneficent achievements! How augmented choirs and crowded congregations would have made the churches reverberate with their pæans of triumph, with their hymns of praise!

Secular institutions are not generally willing to learn from the church; whether with good reason or not is not for me to tell. But I cannot help thinking that they might profitably copy from the church its mode of celebrating the anniversaries of its saints and heroes, its mode of devoting lesson, discourse and hymn to the story of their lives and deeds. They would find it one of the noblest manners of commemorating the dead, and one of the best means of inspiring the living.

As there is little likelihood of secular institutions following this example of the church, why might not the church make festive days of the anniversaries of its national heroes and martyrs? Must the church confine itself for its anniversary celebrations only to saints

and heroes who lived thousands of years ago, or who were of Palestinian or Roman origin? Did the great benefactors of mankind live only in ancient times? Have not modern times seen reformers, emancipators, benefactors, martyrs, holy men and holy women, saints in the truest sense of the word, as great as any of those who lived in the past? Why are not they given a place in the calendar of the church? Was not their cause God's cause, their battle God's battle, their victory God's victory? Did not they sow in tears that mankind might reap in joy? Did not they pour out their heart's blood that their nations might live in peace and happiness?

Often I feel that the church, by refusing to take cognizance of modern benefactors, is losing sight of one of the greatest opportunities for impressing itself strongly upon the present generation. Such recognition of distinguished and heroic benefaction would give modern interest to the church, and enhance its worth as an educator and inspirer. If the story of Moses emancipating an oppressed people more than three thousand years ago, or that of a Maccabee taking up, in the name of liberty, an almost lost cause, and routing a mighty host, can thrill and inspire us to-day, how might we not be thrilled and inspired by a church celebration of Abraham Lincoln, the lowly and despised, yet the God-inspired and fearless, setting free three millions of enslaved human beings, and securing the permanence of our Nation, at the cost of his life !

The Catholic Church has been wiser in this respect than we. It did not cease celebrating and sanctifying men and

Lincoln deserving of canonization. women with the close of its Scripture. It has gone on canonizing people who powerfully impressed their personality on contemporaneous and

succeeding generations. It erred, however, in limiting that distinction to people of its own faith, and to such who benefitted its church. Its roster of saints does not contain the names of the men and women of the larger faith, of the faith as broad as human kind, of them who fought mankind's battles, who healed mankind's wounds, who broke the shackles of the enslaved, who fought and bled and died for liberty, justice and truth, the Charlotte Cordays, the Lessings, the Florence Nightingales, the John Howards, the Father Damiens, the Garrisons, the Lincolus.

Name the saints' days of all the churches, and tell a prouder day than February, the twelfth. Enumerate all the valorous deeds of all the holy men, and tell me What saint greater which will eclipse those of Abraham Lincoln. than Lincoln? Tell the story of the brightest star in your galaxy of saints, of one who, rising from lowliest origin, of one who, unaided by any of the advantages of education or culture or good family, or good looks or social graces, of one who, entirely self-taught and self-trained, of one who, obliged to fight all his life against adverse circumstances, of one who with a world against him, and with no other weapon than an unqueuchable love for right and justice, and with an immovable conviction that truth will be, must be victorious in the end, dared all and conquered all, and when you have told that story, compare it with that of Abraham Lincoln, and then tell me which is the more illustrious, which the more inspiring of the two.

There has never lived a saint, though their name is Legion, whose life and deeds have so kindled a love of true heroism in the heart of the reader as does the

story of the life of Lincoln. It is almost impossible for you to rise from the reading of his

biography, and not have a more sacred regard for the possibilities of true manhood than you ever had before, and not have a new light in your eye, a new love in your heart, a new purpose to your life, a new resolve: so to live, henceforth, and so to strive that mankind may, in some measure, be the better for your living. It is for this reason that I believe that the church would render one of the greatest services to mankind if it would gather its people together every twelfth of February, for a sacred commemoration of the heroic part Lincoln played in one of the world's bitterest struggles and proudest victories. No one could attend that service and not go away the wiser and better for having come and listened to a story which, without the aid of myth and miracle, without the halo of exaggeration and embellishment, is stranger than fiction, and more marvellous tnan legend born of oriental fancy.

There are times when nations, like individuals, perform master-strokes of genius. Such a one was performed by our Nation on that day—one of the most critical in its history—when it dared to choose one, unknown to most, scorned by many, doubted by the best, genius.

yet destined, before long, to win the admiration of all, and to grow deeper into the heart of the American than has any other President, before or since. And it was no special manifestation of divine aid, no supernatural power to work miracles or to cast spells that opened to him the heart of men, that made him the redeemer of the oppressed, the savior of his people.

No man ever had a more difficult path to travel than he, and had he lived in the days when the supernatural had general credence, when it was commonly resorted to explain what otherwise seemed inexplicable, a more difficult a dozen miracles would have been invented for height.

him by his admirers, a dozen revelations would have been vouchsafed for him by his chroniclers, to account for his march from his log-cabin in the wilds of Kentucky to the White House at Washington. No President before or since had been the object of as much vilification, ridicule, carricature as he had been during the short From most abused becomes most honored. That which was his glory was was held up as his disgrace; that which was his

highest wisdom was ridiculed as his monumental folly. Yet, when he was foully felled by the hand of felon, in the very hour of his supremest triumph, the whole Nation wept; the sun and moon seemed to have lost their lustre; the birds in the air seemed to have hushed their voices; the stars and stripes of Old Glory seemed to have paled and shrunken; Jefferson Davis, the leader of the rebellion, mourned the dastardly deed as the greatest calamity to the South next to the failure of the confederacy; and all the nations of the earth vied with each other in doing reverence to his memory, and in sympathizing with the Nation for its irreparable loss.

What was the miracle that wrought the mighty change within so short a time?

It was first of all the simplicity of his nature. His was a mind as open as the woodland in which he was raised; his a soul as clear and sunny as the sky under which Change of sentihe was born. A commoner by birth, a commoner ment due to his he remained all his life. Honors could never simplicity. spoil him; position could never make him forget his worse than humble birth-a childhood with little of a mother's care or of a father's guidance, with scarcely any schooling, with but few books, few friends, few of those pleasures that make childhood a happy memory. He never tried, not even when in the zenith of his glory, to assume a polish or grace or manner that was not his by nature or training. This plainness it was that kept him close to the great majority of the people whose kinsman he was by birth and fortune. Being of the common people, he knew their wants, he had his ear close to their hearts, and when he said and did a thing it was the utterance or the deed of the people incarnate in himself. What a beautiful saying that was of his "God must love the common people, or He would not have made so many of them." What a flash of genius in that answer of his, to the question what his coat of arms would be, "A pair of shirt-sleeves."

The second cause that wrought that miracle lay in his sterling honesty. Other men have risen from lowly estates to positions of eminence, but seldom with the aid of such uncompromising integrity as that which honesty. distinguished the life of Lincoln. Enemies derided, newspapers carricatured him, but no one could ever point a finger of calumny at his honor or honesty. Almost unlimited was the power he possessed, vast was the national treasure under his administration, yet no one was ever able to say that he used his power for personal glory or disposed of treasure for personal ends. No one was ever able to charge him with consulting any other interests than those of his country, or with seeking any other welfare than that of his people. His very face disarmed suspicion. He had never mingled enough with society to have learned the art of posing or dissembling. His greatness lay in his goodness.

Remarkable as was the power with which he could bear abuse, his ability to forgive was more remarkable still. That beautiful saying of his in his inaugural address: "With malice toward none, with charity toward all" was the guiding principle of his entire public career, and often under most trying and vexing conditions. He could afford to be honest because he never sought an honor and was never ruled by ambition. Whatever office he held sought him; whatever honor he had came unsolicited. When advised one day by friends to change a certain expression in an address he was about to deliver, lest it might lose him votes and lead to his defeat, he replied that that expression was his matured conviction, that it was the truth and the whole truth, and that he could better afford defeat with that expression than victory without it.

It was in that sacred regard for right wherein lay another cause of that marvellous change in the attitude of the Nation toward one whom, but a short time before the leaders scorned or distrusted, or whose ability to lead the Nation through one of the greatest crises even his friends seriously questioned. He had seen slavery in all its sinfulness, and he had sworn to himself that, if ever he should have the power, he would, with God's aid, give it the blow that would crush it forever. He never forgot that pledge. "There is but one question before the American people," said he, early in his career. "'Is Slavery Right or Wrong?' and until that question is answered peace is impossible, and the Union is in danger." And all fearless of the consequences to his political opportunities, he continued, saying: "You cannot, you dare not say that slavery is right! Have the manhood then to say 'it is wrong,' and the courage to stand by your conviction. History, through the centuries, has been teaching us that might masters right! Let it be our mission in this nineteenth century to reverse the maxim and to declare that right makes might!"

They who were present at that speech saw his face, that at other times was almost ugly, made beautiful by the ecstasy of his wrath, saw his stature, already six feet and four inches in height, grow into colossal proportions, and in his voice they heard the ring that must have been heard at Pharaoh's court, when Moses thundered forth: "Let my people free !" or that must have been heard at the Diet of Worms, when Luther, in the face of death, gave utterance to his declaration of conviction: "Here I stand, I cannot otherwise, God help me. Amen."

Verily as a messenger of God spoke Lincoln on that day, and if his hearers did not know it at the beginning of his address, all doubt was dispelled when he concluded that memorable speech with the words: "I know that the Lord is always on the side of the right; but it is my constant anxiety and prayer that I and this Nation should be on the Lord's side."

If men have been called saints because of the holiness of their lives, then is our own Lincoln entitled to saintship. If men A saint and seer, a reformer and an emancipator. have been called prophets because of the luminous truths they uttered, because of their fearless exposure of wrong, and their defense of right, because of their clear prevision of the consequences of wrong, and their heroic efforts to ward them off by converting error into truth, and iniquity into righteousness, then was Lincoln a prophet. If men have been called reformers and emancipators for abolishing the wrongs of ages and for setting free the oppressed and the enslaved, then was Lincoln a reformer and an emancipator. If men have been called martyrs for purchasing other men's rights, and other men's freedom, and other men's happiness at the cost of their own lives, then died Lincoln the death of martyrdom.

And if for these reasons, the saints and prophets, the reformers and emancipators and martyrs, have found a place in the memorial calendar of the church, then is Lincoln entitled to a foremost place among the sainted and blessed of every church, for a better man than he, nor one greater, nor one more blessed than he never lived in any age, nor in any clime.

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A Rabbi's Impressions of the Oberammergau Passion Play By RABBI JOS. KRAUSKOPF, D. D.

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SOME OPINIONS.

From the Author of the "History of Universal Literature," Dr. Gustav Karpeles:

I regard a translation of it into German as exceedingly necessary. We have no work in German literature which points out the dif-ference between Jew and Christian from a modern point of view so critically as you do in your book.

From Dr. B. Feisenthal:

Coming from the clear mind and warm heart of one who masters his subject, written in a popular, yet elevated and elevating han-guage, it will, no doubt, contribute very much to implant into the hearts of its Jewish readers new love for Judaism, and into the hearts of its non-Jewish readers esteem and appreciation of a people and of a religion which many of them were used to look upon with prejudice, often with contermut with prejudice, often with contempt.

Rev. E. P. Dinsmore, Minister of the Second Unitarian Church, writes:

The frame of mind in which the reading of the book left me is one of indignation at the perpetuation of a falsehood against the Jewish people which has wrought such cruel suffering, and its retention upon the pulpits dedicated to Truth.

Claude G. Montefiore writes in "The Jewish Quarterly Review." London.

Dr. Krauskopf puts his own case strongly; he speaks out in no uncertain voice (and well he may) about the calumnies and bitter per-

he speaks out in no uncertain voice (and well he may) about the calumnies and bitter per-secutions from which the Jews have suffered and are suffering, but for himself good will, forbearance and brotherly love are his watch-words; these are the qualities which he de-sires to see prevail and it is to advance their cause that his book was written. One of the most excellent things of Dr. Krauskopf's book is the clear and ingenions way in which the author weaves his New Testament criticisms and his capital descrip-tions of the play together. In the first five sermons we are never allowed to forget that we are listening to some one who has been to Oberanumergan, and that his immediate pur-pose is to give us a description as well as im-pressions of what he actually saw and heard. It is no mere dry criticism therefore which the preacher gives us; no mere assertions of what 'he conceives the course of events to have a-thally been, but while these criticisms and assertions are in a sense the real object of the whole book, they are apparently sub-ordinated to the impressions and descriptions. The total result makes very good reading and leaves a pleasing effect upon the mind leaves a pleasing effect upon the mind

The Hon, Andrew D. White, United States Ambassador to Germany, writes:

The fairness and liberality of your treatment of the whole subject, as well as the beautiful garb you have given the thoughts, ought to commend the work to every thinking man and woman whether Jew or Gentile

From "The Philadelphia Press."

Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf's well-known abil ities as a preacher and writer, a scholar and a man of sincere thought and high intelleca man or sincere thought and high intellec-tion, naturally would tend to make anything he might write on some great religious cere-mony interesting, and a distinct contribution to the matter in hand. But when he ap-proaches such a subject as the Passion Play at Oberammergau from the intense emotional standpoint of one who sees his race maligned in gross caricature, his discussion and descrip tion take on a keener tone, and possess an additional value as a sort of human docu ment.

John E. Roberts, Pastor of the Free Church. Kansas City, Mo., writes:

I wish every Christian in the world could -read that book. Every one that is intelligent and amenable to reason would want to devote every remaining energy to the making of amends to that great people whom to execrate and despise has been the paramount duty of Christians for centuries

Israel Abrahams, Editor of the "Jewish Chron icle," London, writes :

Dr. Krauskopf is always entertaining, here he is bold as well.

His manner is respectful though strong, he is suave though uncompromising.

In snave though the only for the save the save the save the save the historian as well as the theologian. He analyzes the story of the Gospels scene by scene, and fearlessly exposes their incredibility, the lack of his-toric evidence for them. He is particularly core debut the triel of them. good about the trial of Jesus.

From "The Jewish Messenger "

Dr. Krauskopf writes courageously and to Dr. Krauskopf writes courageously and to the point. His words are for both communi-ties and teach a needed lesson to Jew and non-Jew. The one will rise from the perusal of the book with more reverence for his religion and his ancestors, the other with more appreciation of the Jewish creed and knowledge of Jewish history. It is a book adapted to remove prejudices and instil a clearer understanding of the rise of Christian traditions traditions

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