

PRESIDENT LINCOLN.

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ART. V.—*President Lincoln.*

THE scriptural doctrine of Providence assumes: 1. The real existence of the external world. 2. The efficiency of secondary causes. That is, that created minds as agents, originate their own acts; and that material substances have properties or forces inhering in them, which make them the efficient and necessary antecedents of their effects. 3. That all events, whether in nature or history (supernatural events excepted), have their proximate and adequate causes in the agency and properties of created substances, spiritual or material. 4. That God, as an infinite and omnipresent spirit, is not a mere spectator of the world, looking on as a mechanist upon the machine which he has constructed; nor is he the only efficient cause, so that all effects are to be referred to his agency, and so that the laws of nature are only the uniform methods of his operation; but he is everywhere present, upholding all things by the word of his power, and controlling, guiding, and directing the action of second causes, so that all events occur according to the counsel of his will. An abundant harvest is proximately due to the operation of second causes, but God so determines and directs those causes as to secure the designed result. The prosperity of individuals, of communities, and of nations, is due to secondary causes, but those causes are so determined by God, that he is to be acknowledged as the Giver of all good. This is equally true of all events, whether prosperous or adverse, whether in themselves good or evil. Nothing happens by necessity or by chance. God governs all his creatures and all their actions. This universal and absolute control of Divine Providence is, on the one hand, consistent with the character of God, so that he is, in no sense, the author of sin; and, on the other hand, with the nature of his creatures. He governs free agents with certainty, but without destroying their liberty, and material causes, without superseding their efficiency.

It is impossible to express or to conceive the importance of

these familiar principles of scriptural truth. They are not the discoveries of human reason; neither philosophy nor science (when divorced from the Bible) even accepts them. They are however the foundation of all religion, of all order, of all Christian civilization; and the only ground of confidence or hope.

Every great event therefore is to be viewed in two different aspects: first, as the effect of natural causes; and, secondly, as a design and result of God's providence. The interpretation of Divine providence is indeed often a matter of great difficulty and responsibility. It requires humility and caution. Some of his dispensations are, as to their design, perfectly clear, others are doubtful, and others to us and for the present inscrutable. In one thing however we are safe; we have a right to infer that the actual consequences of any event, whether great or small, are its designed consequences; whether intended in judgment or mercy to those affected by them must be determined partly by their nature, partly by their attendant circumstances, and partly by the course of subsequent events. Why the Reformation was suppressed in Italy and Spain, and allowed to succeed in Northern Germany and Great Britain, we cannot even now determine; but it is none the less our duty to recognize these events as due to the ordering providence of God, and to study them as such.

No Christian can look upon the events of the last four years without being deeply impressed with the conviction that they have been ordered by God to produce great and lasting changes in the state of the country, and probably of the world. Few periods of equal extent in the history of our race are likely to prove more influential in controlling the destinies of men. Standing, as we now do, at the close of one stage at least of this great epoch, it becomes us to look back and to look around us, that we may in some measure understand what God has wrought.

Although at the South, and by the partisans of the Southern cause at the North, the cause of the desolating war just brought to a close has been sought elsewhere than in the interests of slavery, the conviction is almost universal, both at home and abroad, that the great design and desire of the authors of the late rebellion were the perpetuation and extension of the system

of African slavery. That this conviction is well-founded is plain, because slavery has been from the formation of the government the great source of contention between the two sections of the country; because the immediate antecedents of secession were the attempts to extend slavery into the free Territories of the Union; the abrogation of the Missouri compromise, in order to facilitate that object; the Dred Scott decision, which shocked and roused the whole country, because it was regarded as proof that even the Supreme Court, the sacred palladium of our institutions, had become subservient to the slave power. The reaction produced by these attempts to perpetuate and extend the institution of slavery, led to the election of Mr. Lincoln, on the avowed platform that while slavery was not to be interfered with within the limits of the States which had adopted the institution, its extension to the free Territories belonging to the United States was to be strenuously resisted. The success of the party holding this principle was the immediate occasion of secession, and the formation of the Southern Confederacy. Besides these obvious facts, it is notorious that the public mind at the South had been exasperated by exaggerated accounts of the anti-slavery feeling at the North, and inflamed by glowing descriptions of an empire founded on slavery, where all property and power should be concentrated in the hands of slaveholders, and all labour performed by slaves. This was advocated as the best organization of society, as the only secure foundation for what was called free institutions, and the only method in which the highest development of man was to be attained. Accordingly slavery was declared to be the cornerstone of the new Confederacy; slaveholders were called upon by the Richmond editors to sustain the burdens of the war, because the war was made for them; and the editor of the leading journal in Charleston, South Carolina, declared that the South sought and desired independence only for the sake of slavery; that if slavery were to be given up, they care not for independence. It cannot therefore be reasonably doubted that the great design of the authors of the rebellion was the extension and preservation of the system of African slavery.

As little can it be doubted that this was a most unrighteous end. Without going to the unscriptural extreme of maintaining

that all slaveholding is sinful, two things are, in the judgment of the Christian world, undeniable; first, that however it may be right in certain states of society and for the time being to hold a class of men in the condition of involuntary bondage, any effort to keep any such class in a state of inferiority or degradation, in order to perpetuate slavery, is a great crime against God and man; and, secondly, that the slave laws of the South, being evidently designed to accomplish that end, were unscriptural, immoral, and in the highest degree cruel and unjust. It is self-evident that only an inferior race can permanently be held in slavery, and it is therefore unavoidable that the effort to perpetuate slavery involves the necessity of the perpetual degradation of a class of our fellow-men. Such was the design and effect of the laws which forbade slaves to be taught to read or write; which prohibited their holding property; which made it a legal axiom that slaves cannot marry; which authorized the separation of parents and children, and of those living as husbands and wives. These laws, which no Christian can justify, had been for more than a century operating at the South. The state of the slaves therefore in 1860 was little, if any, better than it was a hundred years before. Household servants, and, to a certain degree, the slaves in the Border States, had made advances in knowledge and in their social condition; but the great mass of the bondmen in the cotton, rice, and sugar plantations was to the last degree degraded. The journal of Mrs. Fanny Kemble, written a few years ago, photographs these Southern plantations, the slaves, their habitations, their food, dress, and social state, their sufferings and wrongs, in such a way as to compel faith in the fidelity of the picture, while it revolts and horrifies the beholder. To lament over this system as an evil entailed by former generations, to admit that it ought not to be perpetuated, and to acknowledge the obligation to labour for its removal, is one thing; to maintain that the system which necessitates this degradation of millions of our race, is a good system, which ought to be continued and extended, is a very different thing. It is the great revolution which the high price of Southern productions, and the consequent profitableness of slavery, wrought in the opinions and feelings of Southern men on this subject, which is the true

cause of the terrible evils which have rendered the South a desolation. It could not be that an offence so great as the indefinite perpetuity of a system so fraught with evil, and the avowal of the purpose not only to perpetuate but to extend it, could long continue without provoking the Divine displeasure. There is not one man in a thousand who will not be more or less corrupted by the possession of absolute power, even when that power is legitimate. But when it is illegitimate, and requires for its security the constant exercise of injustice, no community and no human being can escape its demoralizing influence. This is evinced in the cast of character which it produces; the arrogance, insubordination, recklessness of the interests and rights of others, the loss of the power to restrain the passions which have few external restraints, which it unavoidably engenders. The moral sense becomes perverted by the necessity of justifying what is wrong, so that we see even good men, men whom we must regard as children of God, vindicating what every unprejudiced mind instinctively perceives to be wrong. It is enough to humble the whole Christian world to hear our Presbyterian brethren in the South declaring that the great mission of the Southern church was to conserve the system of African slavery. Since the death of Christ no such dogma stains the record of an ecclesiastical body. We are not called upon to dwell on the manifold evils, which, until recently, even Southern statesmen and Christians acknowledged to be the inevitable fruits of slavery. It is enough that it operates so unfavourably on the character of the masters, that it dooms the slave to degradation, that by rendering manual labour derogatory, it consigns a large class of the white inhabitants of slave countries to poverty and ignorance. The picture drawn by Southern men of the class known as the "poor whites," is the severest condemnation of slavery which has ever been exhibited to the world.

The first and most obvious consequence of the dreadful civil war just ended, has been the final and universal overthrow of slavery within the limits of the United States. This is one of the most momentous events in the history of the world. That it was the design of God to bring about this event cannot be doubted. Although sagacious men predicted that such must be

the result of secession and an attempt to overthrow the constitution, it was not contemplated at the beginning, and for a long time after the commencement of the war it did not appear to be probable. Almost all foreigners, and a large class of our own people predicted the success of the South, and the chances were, so to speak, in favour at least of a compromise, which would leave slavery untouched within the limits of the States. But God has ordered it otherwise. Resistance to the constitutional limitation of slavery to the States in which it already existed, resistance to all plans of gradual emancipation, the insane purpose to dissolve the Union and overthrow the government in favour of this system, have led to its sudden and final overthrow. The inevitable difficulties and sufferings consequent on such an abrupt change in the institutions and social organization of a great people, must be submitted to, as comprehended in the design of God in these events.

Although the destruction of slavery seems to have been the great end intended in our recent trials, it is plain that this war was designed to affect other important changes in the state of the country. It has settled some of those political questions which kept the public mind in a state of constant agitation. It has determined the limits of State sovereignty. Sovereignty is independence; freedom from any control which is not inward or subjective. He is a sovereign who has the right and the power to do as he pleases. A ruler is sovereign when his own will is his only law; a State is sovereign when it has the right to regulate all its affairs, internal and external, according to its own good pleasure. It is plain that sovereignty is a matter of degrees. Absolute independence belongs only to God. There is no ruler on earth who is not more or less bound by the usages, traditions, and rights of the people whom he governs. There is no nation that is not restricted by the common law of nations. The war has not destroyed the sovereignty of the States; it has simply defined it. It has not obliterated State lines nor abrogated State rights; it has only settled the fact that we are a nation, and not a confederacy of nations, from which any member or any number of members may withdraw at pleasure. The United States are an indissoluble whole, composed of many self-governing communities, whose rights and sovereignty are limited in an

equal degree by a common constitution. The great point decided is, that the allegiance of every American citizen is primarily due to the United States, and not to the particular State to which he may belong. This is only saying that the constitution of the United States, and the laws and treaties made in accordance therewith, bind the conscience of the people, anything in the laws, constitution, or acts of their own States to the contrary notwithstanding. To this conclusion the war forced the South itself. It was seen that the self-defence of their Confederacy as a whole was impossible on the theory of the independent sovereignty of its several parts. To this conclusion, therefore, the whole country has been brought. We are one nation henceforth, so long as it shall please God to grant us his favour.

Another consequence of the war, nearly allied to the one just mentioned, has been the development of the sentiment of nationality. This sentiment was deeply settled in the public mind; but it was in a measure dormant. The war has called it into vigorous and conscious exercise. When the assault on Fort Sumter roused the nation from its slumber, the people started to their feet in the full consciousness of their nationality. That sentiment has nerved their arms, sustained their faith, courage, and patience through four terrible years. It made them willing to send fathers, sons, and brothers to the battle-field, and cheerfully to bear the heavy load of taxation required by the exigencies of the country. It cherished in the popular mind the settled purpose to save the life of the nation at whatever cost. No one can doubt that this sentiment is stronger and more general now than it ever was before. Nor can it be doubted that it must tend to strengthen the bonds of our government, and to give consistency and power to our government, both at home and abroad.

Another no less obvious effect of the war has been the astonishing development of the power and resources of the country. It never entered the imagination of any man that the United States would be able to raise, equip, and sustain, year after year, an army of from five to eight hundred thousand men; a navy of several hundred armed vessels; to raise from the voluntary contributions of the people three thousand millions

of dollars; to provide the immense stores of ordnance, arms, and other munitions of war necessary for such a conflict; to organize the vast material of the quartermaster, commissary, hospital and ambulance departments; in short, no one dreamed that we could rise in four years from one of the lowest to the very highest of the military powers of the earth. What are to be the effects of this astonishing development of power, or what the design of God in thus rousing the nation to exhibit its giant strength in the face of the whole world, we can but conjecture and hope. The effect must necessarily be to increase our self-respect. We have earned the right to place ourselves in the rank of the foremost nations of the age. God grant that the consciousness of strength may not render us arrogant, unjust, or aggressive. It will be a great blessing if this giant should now seek repose, or devote his strength to the works of peace; to conquering the wilderness, to developing the resources of the country, and to making it the refuge of the oppressed and the home of the free. The impression produced on foreign nations by this exhibition of the power and resources of the United States, must be no less profound, and tend, it is to be hoped, to lead them to be less disparaging and contemptuous in their language and spirit, and more disposed to cultivate the relations of amity and peace. If such power and resources are possessed, and capable of being called into action by a moiety of the nation, what may be expected from its energy as a whole, from the united North and South, should any great emergency call for the manifestation of our combined strength?

Another consequence of the war, for which we are bound to be deeply grateful to God, is the astonishing exhibition of benevolence of which it has been the occasion. The history of the Christian and Sanitary Commissions will constitute one of the brightest pages in the records of the human race. Never before were millions of money raised annually by voluntary contributions for the alleviation of human suffering; never before were so many persons of both sexes found willing to devote their time and labour, and risk life and health to carry relief to the suffering, and instruction and consolation to the dying. Our land was covered with ministering angels, and our armies and hospitals everywhere attended and followed by these messengers

of mercy. Still further, at no period of our history has there been such a religious spirit generally manifested by the people of this land. More prayer has probably been offered to God during the past years, from sincere hearts, than in any ten years of the previous history of our country. Never before have there been such frequent, open, and devout recognitions of the authority of God as the Ruler of nations, and of Jesus Christ, his Son, as the Saviour of the world, by our public men, as during the progress of this terrible war.

The war has closed. It has done its work for the present, both of judgment and mercy. While it has reformed some great evils, and conferred upon us some great national blessings, it has left us a heritage of new and difficult problems, in the solution of which the character of the nation and the welfare of this and of coming generations is deeply involved. Among these problems are, 1. The proper treatment of those who have been engaged in the rebellion; 2. The reorganization of society necessary on the sudden transition from slave to free labour; 3. The means to be adopted to secure the rights of the freedmen, and to promote their mental, moral, and social improvement; 4. How far they are to be admitted, and by what degrees, and on what terms, to the right of suffrage and all other privileges of citizenship. These are subjects on which extreme opinions are zealously advocated by earnest and powerful parties. Just when these momentous questions arise for decision, the man who, of all others, by common consent was the best qualified, both by his character and adventitious circumstances, to deal with them, has been called away. The government has changed hands, not by the expiration of the term of one chief magistrate and the election of another; not even by the death of the President in the course of nature, but by the sudden, unexpected blow of an assassin. This is the event which summoned the nation to humiliation and prayer. Never were these duties more incumbent. The fact that all things are ordered by God, and must work out his wise designs, does not change the nature of afflictions, or modify the duties which flow from them as afflictions. When God brings any great calamity upon us, he means us to feel it. He designs that we should be humbled, that we should mourn and pray. It is thus that he makes our

trials the means of good. If we harden our hearts under his chastising hand; if we refuse to mourn and to humble ourselves in his sight, our afflictions become punishments, and work out for us only evil, however they may minister to the good of others.

The violent death of such a man as President Lincoln in such a crisis, was therefore a proper occasion for national sorrow, humiliation, and prayer.

It is, in the first place, a most mysterious event. We cannot see the reason for it, nor conjecture the end it is designed to accomplish. We can see the reason for many of our recent national disasters. Had we been as overwhelmingly successful at the beginning as we have been at the close of the war, none of the great results to which we just referred would have followed. Slavery would not have been overthrown, and nationality would not have been vitalized; our power would not have been developed, and our stand among the nations of the earth would have been very different from what it is at present. But why Mr. Lincoln should have been murdered just when he was most needed, most loved, and most trusted, is more than any man can tell. God however is wont to move in a mysterious way. It was mysterious to the struggling church of the first centuries, when the apostles, and afterwards one great leader, and another, and another were cut down. It was and is a mystery why the early Reformers had their voices, when raised to proclaim the gospel in a corrupt age, choked in the flames; why Henry IV. of France, who stood between the cruel fanaticism of the Romanists and the Protestants of that fair land, should be the victim of assassination; or why the pious and lovely Edward VI. of England, should have been taken away at the dawn of the Reformation; or why the graceful head of the godly Lady Jane Grey should have fallen on the scaffold. These are things we cannot, even after the lapse of centuries, understand. There is a use in mystery. What are we, that we should pretend to understand the Almighty unto perfection, or that we should assume to trace the ways of him whose footsteps are in the great deep? It is good for us to be called upon to trust in God when clouds and darkness are round about him. It makes us feel our own ignorance and impotency,

and calls into exercise the highest attributes of our Christian nature. It is therefore doubtless a beneficent dispensation which calls upon this great nation to stand silent before God, and say, It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good in his sight. The Judge of all the earth must do right.

The death of Mr. Lincoln is not only a mysterious event; it is just cause of great national sorrow. The leader in the opposition in the British House of Commons recently said, in reference to this event, that on rare occasions national calamities assume the character of domestic afflictions. This is eminently true. When Mr. Lincoln died, the nation felt herself widowed. She rent her garments, she sat in the dust, put ashes on her head, and refused to be comforted. Never in our history, seldom if ever in the history of the world, has the heart of a great people been so moved as when, on the 15th of April last, the intelligence flashed over the country that our President had been murdered. It was not merely sorrow for the loss of a great man when most needed, or of one who had rendered his country inestimable services, but grief for a man whom every one personally loved. It was this that gave its peculiar character to that day of lamentation. Still more remarkable in the annals of the country and of the world was the 19th of April—the day of the President's funeral. At 12 o'clock, noon, of that memorable day, the whole country was draped in mourning; our palaces and cottages, our public buildings and private residences, our cities, and villages, and isolated dwellings. Wealth veiled herself in crape, and poverty sought some symbol of sorrow, however insignificant. All our churches at that hour were filled with weeping worshippers. Millions of people were on their knees before God. The sun never shone on such a spectacle. Where, moreover, can history point to a funeral progress of fifteen hundred miles through countless myriads of uncovered mourners? The past cannot be recalled. It was truly said by the Rev. Dr. Dix, of New York, "Abraham Lincoln has been canonized and immortalized by the blow of an assassin." No effect is without its adequate cause. Such an unparalleled movement of the heart of this great people; such an answering cry of indignation and sorrow from foreign, and even unfriendly nations, prove beyond contradiction that Abra-

ham Lincoln deserved to be revered, loved, and lamented, as few rulers of men have ever merited the confidence and love of their fellow-men.

It was his character, his public services, and the avowed principles of his administration which gave him this hold on the heart of the people, and renders his death so great a national calamity.

As to his character, little need be said. He was a plain man. His early life was passed in the self-denial and toil of poverty. He was in great measure a self-educated man; the simplest rudiments of learning were all that he received in the schools. Education however is not learning; it is the exercise and development of the powers of the mind. There are two great methods by which this end may be accomplished. It may be done in the halls of learning, or in the conflicts of life. Mr. Lincoln's education was effected by the latter method. He was born in 1809. In his twenty-seventh year he was elected a member of the Legislature of Illinois, where he served for several years in succession. In 1837 he was admitted to the bar; in 1846 he was chosen a member of Congress; in 1848 he was a delegate to the national convention; in 1858 he sustained on equal terms his protracted struggle with Mr. Douglas before the people of Illinois and under the eyes of the whole nation. Thus for twenty-three years before his election to the Presidency in 1860, his mind was taxed to its utmost, and was in constant contact with the great questions and principles which agitated the public mind. During the four years of his first term of office, which of all the colleges or universities of Christendom could have afforded him such an educational discipline? He grew in those years probably more than in all his previous life. As an intellectual man, therefore, for his natural mental endowments, for the acquisition of knowledge gained in all these struggles and political conflicts; for the discipline to which he was subjected during his official career, he deserves the high admiration of his country as a man of sterling ability. None but pedants can look on Mr. Lincoln as an uneducated man. He had a culture a thousand times more effective than that usually effected in the schools of learning. He was remarkably sagacious; perceiving intuitively the truth, presenting it clearly, and sustaining it

with arguments pertinent and conclusive. Some of his state papers and public letters are masterly; they can hardly be excelled as means of accomplishing the end he had in view. He was reticent of his plans and purposes. He weighed long and deliberately his own measures, with little consultation. Facile and easily influenced on minor matters, he was immovable on all great questions on which he had once made up his mind. He was therefore consistent in all his plans and principles. He kept a steady hand on the helm of state, and never suffered the ship of the nation to swerve from its course. His moral character was unimpeachable; his integrity was proverbial; he was known among men as honest Abraham Lincoln. The crowning trait of his character however was his tenderness of heart; it was this more than his talents, position, or services that endeared him to the people. A volume might be filled with illustrations of this feature of his character. There is not an instance on record in which an application for mercy or relief was not either granted or tearfully declined. It was a standing order at the White House, that no matter how he was engaged, day or night, no one who came to him with a petition for pardon should be either turned aside or delayed. He has risen at midnight, and ridden several miles to a distant post, for fear that a reprieve should not reach its destination in time. A father applied to the proper authorities for permission for a son in the rebel service to return home, and was refused. A younger brother, a mere boy, determined to make a personal appeal to the President. He was readily admitted, and presented his petition. "Ah, my son," said Mr. Lincoln, "that is a case in which I cannot interfere." "But, sir," replied the boy, "my mother is ill, and will die if my brother does not come home." This the President could not stand, and without a word wrote and signed the order of release. If this were a weakness, God bless the weak! We should remember that Jesus Christ never refused to relieve the sufferings or hear the prayers of any child of sorrow, no matter how unworthy or sinful he might be. And if God were not thus merciful, we should all perish. This trait in Mr. Lincoln's character was so conspicuous, it is not necessary to dwell upon it. It was made a complaint against him by sterner men, that he often stood in the way of justice. How-

ever this may have been, it cannot be denied that the people loved him for his tenderness. God poured on his head the excellent oil of mercy, and its fragrance fills the land.

No one of our Presidents so frequently and devoutly acknowledged his dependence upon God, or so earnestly requested the prayers of God's people in his behalf. The Hon. Mr. Colfax, an elder in the Presbyterian Church, and one of the most intimate of Mr. Lincoln's personal friends, has given public sanction to the report, which has been so extensively circulated, of his avowal of his personal faith in Christ, and love for the divine Redeemer. There is much therefore in the mental and moral character of our late President, and in the integrity, purity, and kindness of his heart, to account for the deep reverence and love universally manifested for him throughout the country and the whole civilized world. A man who retained in the highest post of honour and power the native simplicity of his character, without affectation or assumption; who was never dismayed by disaster nor elated by success; who bore insult and injustice without enmity or retaliation; who laboured to the last to do good to his enemies; who never exulted over a fallen foe; who felt "malice for none, and charity for all," assuredly deserves the epithets of both good and great. As such, Abraham Lincoln will be known in all coming time.

His public services cannot yet be fully appreciated. He was called to the administration of the government at the outbreak of the greatest rebellion of modern times. The task which he had to accomplish was pronounced by all the leading statesmen of Europe to be impossible. To reduce to submission to the constitution and laws a population of seven or eight millions of men, occupying a territory of a thousand miles in extent, with a seacoast of more than double that amount; animated by one spirit, inflamed with the deadliest passions; whose pride, power, possessions, and cherished institutions were all staked on the issue; led by men of the highest courage and culture, and sustained by the avowed sympathy and secret aid of almost all foreign governments, was indeed a herculean task. This work had to be undertaken without preparation, without an army, without a navy, without adequate supplies of any kind. Everything had to be created, and when prepared, had to be used

under every disadvantage arising from the number and distance of the places to be guarded or assailed. The work however has been done; the Union is restored; the constitution is preserved; the rights of property, the liberty of speech and of the press remain intact. No breach has been made in our fundamental law; no encroachment allowed on the charter of our rights. We are as free a people at this moment as when the war began. We have risen immensely in power and influence among the nations of the earth. Four millions of slaves have been emancipated by the course of events, and without infraction of the constitution. Mr. Lincoln's administration bids fair to form one of the most important epochs in the history of the world. The man who entered on the epoch aware of the tremendous responsibility he assumed, and begging his fellow-citizens to pray for him; and who so conducted the affairs of the government, that the struggle, under the blessing of God, has resulted in the complete success of the national cause, has rendered a service to his country and to the world which few men have ever rendered to the generation in which they lived.

As to the principles of his administration, a religious journal is not the place for any extended discussion. Our only object is to indicate in few words what we regard as those principles of his policy which constitute a part of his claim on the love and gratitude of his country.

The first thing to be noticed under this head is, that while Mr. Lincoln had definite and avowed objects in view, he with singular wisdom kept himself free as to the means to be adopted for their accomplishment. He was no fanatic, wedded to one idea, or to any abstract principle. If one plan would not do, he would try another. He formed the simple determination to do the best he could; but what *was* best he did not attempt to decide beforehand, but left to be determined by the circumstances of the country and the state of the public mind. The object of the war from the beginning, he declared to be the preservation of the Union and the authority of the constitution. To this object he steadily adhered. It was not, and it never became an anti-slavery war. The abolition of slavery was no more a legitimate object of civil war than the abolition of false religion. Mr. Lincoln distinctly declared, that if he could save

the Union with slavery, he would do it; if the destruction of slavery was necessary to the preservation of the Union, he would do all he lawfully could to overthrow that system. It was not until he became convinced that, as the war had been inaugurated for the preservation and extension of slavery, it could not be successfully terminated without emancipating the slaves, that he resolved upon that measure. God has evidently so overruled the course of events that the destruction of slavery is the inevitable consequence of the triumph of the national arms. The wisdom of the President was however conspicuously displayed in his adhering to the legitimate object of the war, and allowing emancipation to follow as a consequence, instead of making it an end to be distinctly aimed at.

Another prominent feature of Mr. Lincoln's administration was a spirit of conciliation. From first to last he endeavoured to persuade the revolted States to return to their allegiance, in order to save them from the miseries of war. And in the process of reconstruction his ruling idea was to disturb as little as possible existing relations, to inflict as few penalties as possible, and to restore all rights and privileges as fully and as rapidly as was consistent with public safety. He made a clear distinction between sin and sinners, between the offence and the offenders. This is a distinction which is not commonly made, for the obvious reason that generally there is no legitimate ground for it. In ordinary cases of theft and murder all the criminality and turpitude which belong to the offence attach also to the offender. But in other cases, especially in the offences of nations or communities, the distinction is legitimate and important. Idolatry is a great crime; it is apostasy from God. It is denounced in the Bible as the greatest of all sins; it is declared to be always inexcusable. And yet no man can doubt that had we been born in India or Africa, we too would have been idolaters. Popery, the worship of the Virgin Mary, the adoration of the Host, are justly regarded by all Protestants as great offences against God and Christ. But had we been born in Italy or Spain, we too had been papists. Slavery, as it existed at the South (meaning by slavery the whole system of slave laws there in force) is also a great moral evil. And yet had we been born and educated under that system, we doubtless

would either have acquiesced in it or defended it. Rebellion is a great crime (unless for just cause,) and the rebellion of the South was wanton and wicked; yet we must be strong in our self-conceit if we take for granted that had we been South Carolinians or Georgians, we should have resisted the overwhelming tide of popular feeling. This is not apologizing for idolatry, popery, slavery, or rebellion. It is only saying in other words what our blessed Lord himself says, when he declares it will be more tolerable in the day of judgment for the heathen than for us. This is true, not because heathenism is not the sum and essence of all moral evil, but because there is in such cases a great distinction between the criminality of an offence in itself considered, and the responsibility of the offender. The reason for this is obvious. A man's character, his opinions, feelings, and conduct are determined in part by the inward principles of his nature, and largely by the external influences to which he is subject. If kept in ignorance of the truth; if error is constantly inculcated, and all the power of education and example be brought to bear in favour of evil, it is almost unavoidable that the judgment will be perverted and the mind corrupted. Men thus brought up to regard idolatry, popery, slavery, or any other form of evil to be right, and surrounded by those who support and defend it, will not, by a righteous judge, as our Lord teaches, be dealt with according to the heinousness of the offence in itself considered, but according to the circumstances and opportunities of the offender. That Mr. Lincoln recognized this obvious principle of justice is plain from his official declarations and acts.

It is no less plain that he made another distinction equally important, viz., that between moral and political offences. Mr. Lincoln was not an advocate for impunity in crime. He did not refuse to allow the law to take its course when men were convicted of slave-trading, of arson, or murder. Executions for all these offences occurred under his administration, and with his official sanction. But he declared his aversion to the infliction of capital punishment for any political offences. If any of the rebel commanders, or other officials, should be convicted of burning cities, of murdering our soldiers, or starving our prisoners, he would have acquiesced in their being punish-

ed to the full extent of their criminality. In this the public conscience, as well as the public feeling, would fully have sustained him. But he saw clearly that there is a great difference between moral criminals and political offenders. This is a distinction which is made by all enlightened and Christian people. Great Britain and our own country have entered into treaties with other nations for the delivering to justice, of forgers, murderers, thieves, but not of rebels. Political refugees find a secure asylum under the flag of England, and of the United States, wherever it floats on land or sea. Even the Turks have acted on this principle, and refused to deliver to their Russian neighbours those who had rebelled against the authority of the Czar. This is not done on the assumption that rebellion is not often, perhaps generally, a great moral offence, but because whether it is an offence against morality or not, depends on circumstances. The right of revolution is a sacred right of freedom. It is a right which, if Englishmen and Americans had not claimed and exercised, despotism had now been universal and inexorable. It is of special moment in times of popular excitement, that great principles of moral and of civil policy should be kept constantly in view. It is plain that rebellion, as homicide, may be an atrocious crime, or justifiable, or commendable, according to circumstances. Whereas moral offences are always, and under all circumstances, evil. A good thief, or a good murderer, is as much a solecism as good wickedness. But a good rebel is no such solecism. Hampden was a rebel, so was Washington; they and thousands of other good men have risen in armed resistance to constituted authority, and such resistance has been justified by the verdict of the enlightened conscience of the world. But even when rebellion is not justifiable; nay, when it is not only a great mistake, but really a great crime in itself considered, it does not necessarily follow that those who commit it must be wicked men. It is often the effect of wrong political theories. In the protracted wars in England, between the houses of York and Lancaster, good men were found on either side. So also, in the war between Charles I. and the Parliament; between the adherents of the Stuarts and the house of Hanover. It did not follow that a man was wicked because he conscientiously believed that the Pretender

was legally entitled to the British throne. A man might be a Christian, and believe that the Salic law bound the Spanish nation, and rendered it incumbent on him to be a Carlist. In like manner it cannot be doubted that thousands of our Southern brethren religiously believed that their allegiance was due first to their several States, then, and only conditionally, to the Union. This does not infer moral depravity. No sane man can believe that all the Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist clergy and laity, who entered into the rebellion, were unrenowned, wicked men. There is, therefore, a distinction between political offences and ordinary crimes, and to treat both alike would be a violation of the plainest principles of justice. This is not saying that rebellion, except for adequate cause, is not a moral offence; nor is it saying that the late Southern rebellion was not a great crime, for such it assuredly was; nor is it saying that because a man thinks a thing is right, to him it is right; but it is saying that there may be a great difference between the criminality of an act in itself, and the blameworthiness of the offenders. Men forget what a strange anomalous thing human nature is. There have been pious persecutors, and pious slave-traders. The Scotch Covenanters believed that it was the duty of the civil magistrate to suppress false religions, and therefore they felt justified in treating their opponents as their opponents treated them. As Samuel hewed Agag in pieces, they believed heretics should be put to death. John Newton (author of hymns still sung in all our churches,) was a slave-trader after his conversion. Why, then, must we take it for granted that every man who aided the rebellion was in heart a reprobate.

The reason why the people join in the clamour for the judicial condemnation of the rebels, is that they do not discriminate in their own minds between the indignation excited by the atrocities committed during the rebellion and the political offence itself. That our prisoners were massacred, or deliberately starved to death, that cities were burned, and hundreds of Union men persecuted to death, may well excite the greatest abhorrence, and call for the severest condemnation. Let the authors of such offences be arrested and tried for these atroci-

ties, and no voice will be raised in opposition. But this is very different from calling for the judicial execution of the abettors of the rebellion for their crime against the state. We believe indeed that the authors of the rebellion were, to a great degree, controlled by a wicked ambition and the desire to perpetuate slavery. Men however can be tried only for overt acts. One man may commit the same act from one motive and another for another. One may act under the influence of the worst feelings of our nature, and another from a mistaken sense of duty, and from a wrong political theory. We join, therefore, in denouncing the late rebellion as a great crime; we believe that its authors and abettors, in many cases, were influenced by bad motives; that there is no apology for the spirit of pride, arrogance, malice, and hatred, which so generally characterized all classes at the South during this struggle; we abhor the cruelties, the murders, confiscations, and violence of all kinds of which loyal men were made the victims; and we believe our late President would not have shielded any of the authors of these acts of cruelty and violence from the just punishment of their crimes. All this may be admitted, and it remains none the less true, that the political offence of rebellion is to be distinguished from these crimes by which it was attended. Good men shared in the rebellion, but not in these acts of violence. Mr. Lincoln's avowed purpose not to inflict the extreme penalty of the law upon political crimes was, therefore, perfectly consistent with his condemnation of the rebellion, and his abhorrence of the spirit and conduct of its authors.

Another reason on which this purpose was founded was that, while the punishment of ordinary crimes is indispensable to the well-being of society, the punishment of political offences is often unnecessary. In many cases treason and rebellion, when confined to a few persons, must be severely punished, as the only means of deterring others from the commission of the same offence. But when a rebellion involves a great multitude of men, and leads to a civil war which issues in the establishment of the legitimate government, no such necessity ordinarily exists. The misery and loss consequent on the suppression of such outbreaks answers all the ends of punishment as a means of prevention. In the present case, no man can esti-

mate the amount of suffering which the rebellion has entailed upon the South. The loss of property must amount to many thousands of millions of dollars; all productive industry has been interrupted for four years; cities have been destroyed; whole districts of country laid waste; the great body of the property-holders have been impoverished. To this must be added the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives. Fathers, sons, and brothers have been swept away. Almost every family is in mourning. Besides all this, the South has lost its prestige and preponderance. They are no longer masters. They are humbled in their own eyes, and in the eyes of the whole world. If all this is not sufficient to prevent rebellion for centuries to come, no number of executions for political offences can have any effect. We might as well empty a cup of water into the ocean to increase its volume.

Thirdly, all unnecessary punishments are positive evils. They exasperate instead of subduing; they exalt criminals into martyrs. The sympathy felt for the victims is transferred to the cause for which they suffer. Unnecessary punishment degrades justice into vengeance; all history proves its impolicy. Ireland, Poland, and Venetia, stand as examples and warnings. It is as necessary to conciliate the South as it was to subdue it. If we fail in this, we cut the locks of our own strength, and prepare millions of allies for any foreign enemy by whom we may hereafter be assailed. Nothing would better please the despots of the Old World than that we should pursue such a course as to make the South to us what Ireland is to England and Poland to Russia. The cry for blood and confiscation which has been raised in so many quarters, and which has desecrated so many sanctuaries, is insensate as well as anti-Christian. It is a cry for the nation not only to degrade but to enfeeble itself, and to entail upon our posterity a burden which it will be hard for them to bear. Our only security is in doing right. Let us be as magnanimous and generous in victory as we were brave and constant in conflict. The character of our country, and its influence for good over other nations depends more perhaps on the way in which we use our victory than upon success in securing it. This our friends abroad all see, and therefore with one voice they deprecate all judicial vengeance,

and call upon us to give to the world an example of leniency as imposing as our exhibition of courage and strength.

Once more, the divinely appointed method of overcoming evil is to return good for evil. If thy enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for by so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. All that is necessary is that we should act as the Christian Commission did in dealing with the rebel wounded and prisoners. They fed, clothed, nursed, and tended them, without making it an antecedent condition that they should renounce their political heresies, or profess repentance for their rebellion. All they had to do was to be submissive and quiet. The consequence was that thousands were converted from enemies into friends.

President Lincoln however was no weakling. Although his avowed policy was that of conciliation; although he earnestly desired to make the South cordially loyal and submissive to the government, and win them back to the love of the Union which their fathers had cherished, his main object nevertheless was the security of the government and of our national institutions; and therefore it was only so far as was consistent with that object that he favoured the restoration of the abettors of the rebellion to the rights of citizenship and to the possession of political power. But his views of what was consistent with the public safety were of the largest and most liberal character.

The principles which regulated his action regarding slavery, constituted a third distinguishing feature of Mr. Lincoln's policy. On this subject he held, 1. That all men are the children of Adam; made of one blood and possessing the same nature; and therefore are all entitled to be regarded and treated as men. No symptom of permanent slavery can be justified, except on the assumption that the enslaved class are a different and inferior race of beings. If all men are by nature one, if all have the same essential attributes of humanity, there can be no just reason why one class should be for ever condemned to inferiority and bondage. It was the great scriptural truth of the unity of the human race as to origin and species, which lay at the foundation of all President Lincoln's opinions and policy in regard to slavery.

2. This being the case, neither the colour of the skin, nor

unessential differences in the varieties of men, is any just ground for a permanent distinction between one class of men and another. He held that every man fit to be free (and not otherwise) was entitled to be free; that every man able to manage property had the right to hold property; and that every man capable of discharging the duties of a father is entitled to the custody of his children. From this it would follow, by parity of reason, that every man who has the intelligence and moral character necessary to the proper exercise of the elective franchise is entitled to enjoy it, if compatible with the public good. In other words, these rights and privileges cannot justly be made dependent on the colour of the skin or any other adventitious difference. On the other hand, it is a dictate of common sense that no man, whether white or black, has a right to exercise any privilege for which he is not qualified. A child, or a criminal, is not entitled to the liberty due to an adult or to a virtuous man. An idiot or a lunatic is not entitled to the control of property or the custody of children; nor are the grossly ignorant or vicious entitled to the exercise of any civil prerogative which they cannot enjoy with safety to society.

Once more, it is plain that Mr. Lincoln was opposed to all sudden revolutionary changes. These were to be avoided, and he strove to avoid them so far as was consistent with the paramount aim of his administration, the preservation of the national life.

Such we regard as a correct, although very imperfect view of the character, the services, and principles of our lamented President. The profound grief occasioned by his death, the abiding sense of the loss which the nation has sustained in his being called away at this important crisis of our history, not only prove the high estimate entertained of his character and services, but the almost universal approbation accorded by the people to the distinctive principles of his administration. This public judgment cannot be reversed; nor can it be safely disregarded. Popular excitement may cause the public mind to swerve for a time from the course marked out by this great and good man, but the national heart, having once approved of his policy, will be sure to revert to it, and pay him the highest honour a people can render a ruler, by carrying out his prin-

ciples, and doing what he would have done, had God spared his life.

We are called upon to humble ourselves before God under a great national bereavement, but, at the same time, we are bound to render thanks to the Giver of all good, for having raised such a man as Mr. Lincoln to the presidency in the day of our trial, and also to pray that the mantle of the dead may fall upon the living; that the Spirit which was on him who led us through the wilderness, may be given in double measure to him whose office it is to give the nation rest.