

## An Analysis of Lincoln's Funeral Sermons

JAY MONAGHAN

An analysis of the sermons preached immediately after Lincoln's assassination discloses that the religious sects—or at least the pastors—reacted in a way peculiar to their creed. Some churches were vindictive, blaming Lincoln's assassination on the whole South, crying for vengeance. Others pleaded for understanding and tolerance.

It is easy to assume that the churches reflected the politics of their geographical locations—with Boston the fountain head of bile. This, however, was not the case. Most of the churches represented a point of view at variance with that of the community—a denominational slant which theological psychologists might enjoy explaining.

The circumstances of Lincoln's assassination were perfect for evangelic appeal, and the records provide unique material for investigation. Lincoln was shot on Good Friday, Christ's Day. Ministers all over the Union had time to prepare special sermons for the following Sunday. The North, in a state of ecstasy over the recent surrender of Robert E. Lee at Appomattox, was shocked to hysteria by the tragic news. Supreme happiness and supreme sorrow, dramatically superimposed, created an emotional excitement unparalleled in American history. Congregations everywhere assembled in church to hear their own incoherent anger expressed suitably by the pastor. Ministers recognized the responsibility and accepted the challenge.

In Civil War days it was customary for the church elders to compliment the minister by publishing an unusual sermon in pamphlet form for the congregation. Four hundred and four of Lincoln's funeral sermons have been preserved, and it seems reasonable to assume that each one represented the majority opinion of the congregation that published it. To determine the attitude of each sect, all the published discourses were analyzed. The first task of the analyst was to separate the vindictive and tolerant sermons. This is not so complicated as it sounds. True, there are degrees of tolerance and vindictiveness. Some sermons are hard to classify, but the doubtful cases are surprisingly few. Preachers of that day had little hesitancy in distinguishing right from wrong. Before drawing the conclusions

set out below, ten per cent of the sermons—questionable cases—were withdrawn. The remaining ninety per cent displayed their colors in no uncertain terms. Can there be any question about the attitude of the Reverend Henry Darling toward the South when he told his Presbyterian pastorate in Albany that such a depraved assassin as Booth could not have ripened in any but the congenial Southern soil? It is equally certain that the Reverend Daniel Rice felt the same way toward the dying Confederacy when he told his congregation that the catastrophe was God's way of goading the people to vengeance. The Reverend T. M. Hopkins of Bloomington, Indiana, may be assumed to have been vindictive when he told his church that the assassination might have been prevented if captured Confederates—Jeff Davis was not yet among them—had been "hung as high as Haman, in the streets of Washington." Even more outspoken, the Reverend David Dyer, preaching to convicts at Albany with words they could understand, said:

After repeated acts of robbery and piracy on our Northern borders . . . after persistent and earnest efforts to plunge us in war with foreign nations; after basely attempting to burn at night New York and other Northern cities; after destroying by slow and horrible tortures, in Southern dungeons, thousands of our brave soldiers; now this hellish spirit has branded our beloved President a tyrant, and has planned and accomplished his death.<sup>1</sup>

In Cincinnati, Elder Wallace Shelton, pastor of the colored brethren, in his Zion Baptist congregation predicted that "no long time would elapse before Jeff Davis and his fellow-conspirators would take up their abode in hell with that other traitor, Judas Iscariot." President Andrew Johnson, according to Elder Shelton, was God's instrument of vengeance to deal out retribution to traitors. Negroes were entitled to feelings of hostility toward the South, but really impassioned vindictiveness was reserved for the Nordics. No black man of record equaled the Reverend Edwin B. Webb shouting in Shawmut Church for extermination of all rebels. "Hear me, patriots, sires of murdered sons, weeping wives and orphans,—I say *exterminated!* . . . Make the halter certain to the intelligent and influential, who are guilty of

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<sup>1</sup> David Dyer, *Discourse occasioned by the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, delivered in the Albany Penitentiary* . . . (Albany, 1865), 10.

perjury and treason." Then lapsing into a perroration the Reverend Mr. Webb continued:

Two ways under our ship of State are *justice* and *mercy*. In the providence of God, block after block has been knocked away, prop after prop removed, till now, just ready to glide into the new future, she is settling all her weight upon her ways,—ways made slippery by the blood of the murdered Chief Magistrate, and Minister: *woe, woe, woe* to him who puts himself in the line of her course! Infinitely better for him had he been strangled at the birth!<sup>2</sup>

No one will mistake the roar of these lions for the supplications of the clerical lambs. Foremost among the latter, the Reverend William T. Wilson told Albany Episcopalians that the Confederates "have proved desperate rebels . . . it is true, but they have proved also their gallantry on many a stricken field." In spite of the evidence in Lincoln's assassination, he said, "no leader of the rebellion could excite or approve of such a damning deed." The Reverend Henry Palethorp Hay in Philadelphia admonished his flock to carry on the benign principles of Lincoln: "May calm reason be our guide . . . while we mete out justice even tempered with mercy." Equally unresentful, the Reverend A. B. Dascamb encouraged the young men in Waitsfield, Vermont, to profit by Lincoln's example and trust in God. The Reverend J. L. Janeway drew the attention of his parish in Flemington, New Jersey, from the wicked Southerners by shifting the blame on God. "Another lesson taught is, a solemn recognition of God's hand in the event. . . . Let us banish vengeful feelings." The Reverend E. H. Randall in Randolph, Vermont, believed the assassination the North's penalty for relying on armies instead of on God. In Dedham, Massachusetts, the Reverend Samuel Babcock proclaimed Lincoln's death, judgment on a wicked nation. In New York the Reverend N. L. Rice warned members of the Presbyterian Church on Fifth Avenue that the assassination was "probably" permitted to make the nation look more to God.

Such tolerant and impersonal addresses are easily winnowed from the sermons of hate.

As soon as the tolerant and vindictive sermons are separated, the difference between the various religious sects toward the South becomes apparent. The militancy of the

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<sup>2</sup> Edwin B. Webb, *Memorial Sermons* . . . (Boston, 1865), 60-61.

Reformation seems to have still run in the chancels of certain churches. Heading the list of vindictiveness toward the Confederacy, the Unitarians' collection of published sermons show 80 per cent to have been unrelentingly opposed to any clemency for the conquered South. The Lutheran and Congregational sermons were 75 per cent and 74 per cent vindictive. Next came the Presbyterians with 62 per cent. The Episcopalians, Methodists, and Baptists were evenly split, fifty-fifty, for and against lenient reconstruction, if the sermons that have survived may be used as an index. The Hebrews, Catholics, and Quakers stood aloof from the political imbroglio, publishing few sermons on the subject. Those that are preserved breathe condolence without vituperation.

These conclusions may be attacked on the ground that the Unitarians and Congregationalists predominated in New England, hot-plate for abolitionism. Could not the high voltage vindictiveness in these churches be attributed to environment? No! A survey of sermon-vindictiveness shows Massachusetts and Ohio to have led all the rest, but the majority of the Unitarian sermons did not come from these two states. Also it is noticeable that New York and Pennsylvania were the most tolerant states according to all the sermons from these areas, yet most of the Lutheran and Presbyterian sermons came from here. Indeed, it took the combined tolerance of all the other sects to offset the vengeful attitude of these two churches and give the states a tolerant rating. Of the four ranking churches, then, only one—the Congregational—acted in conformity with its environment. Three out of the four did not. Certainly denominational attitudes did not conform to geographical and political boundaries on the question of harsh reconstruction of the South.

These conclusions must be taken with some reservations. Perhaps three hundred and sixty-four sermons are not sufficient for a fair sample of all the churches in the Northern states. Then, too, the sermons analyzed may have conformed to the politics of the local precincts in which the churches were located, and at the same time been at variance with the politics of the larger state areas. In all the vindictive sermons there is a noticeable flavor of opportunism rationalized as morality. Lincoln, it will be remembered, was

elected the second time by a coalition of Republicans and Union Democrats. The two wings were quarreling for mastery of the party at the time of his death. With reason the Republican wing realized that they could get no majority at the polls if the Democratic South was readmitted to the Union with a restored right to vote. Not only must Southern Democrats be disfranchised, but the Negro vote also must be attained in order to hold a safe majority. The Democratic wing of the party, on the other hand, hoped to vanquish their radical colleagues by re-enfranchising the Southern Democrats who had seceded from the Union. Lincoln's death at the hands of a Southern fanatic gave the radicals an advantage. Surely the people would not agree to re-enfranchise the murderers of the President! As the Reverend Henry E. Parker told his congregation in Concord, New Hampshire, "This act will utterly destroy what little remaining sympathy there was in any quarter for the falling cause of the confederacy." Another Congregationalist, the Reverend Leonard Swain, in Providence, Rhode Island, reiterated the same sentiment when he said: "We have overpowered our enemies [and agreed] that we can afford to be generous. . . . All this is brought to an end at once and forever by this dreadful event."

In Johnstown, New York, the Reverend Daniel Stewart told a church full of Presbyterians, "The feeling of compassion for a conquered enemy should pass over into the feeling of revenge for an irreparable act." In Boston, Harvard-educated Unitarian James Freeman Clarke, a liberal protestant from Protestantism who dared decorate his church with all the splendor of a Catholic cathedral, bluntly warned his congregation that rebel politicians were usurping the government. His funeral voice thundered from the myterious shadows under purple drapes looped to the walls with white flowers, "In dying [Lincoln] may have saved us from their audacious craft."

The justice of enfranchising the ex-slaves was voiced by many ministers, unconscious, perhaps, of all its aspects. The Reverend Richard Eddy disguised the political motive only slightly when he told his congregation that justice called not for vengeance but for the full penalty of the law for treason, utter extinction of rebellion and "the equality of all men [to vote?] before the law." The political benefit of

keeping Southern Democrats disfranchised was noted specifically by the Reverend W. H. Hornblower, Presbyterian minister at Paterson, New Jersey, when he said of the rebels generally: "We are no longer to extend the hand and welcome him back to all the rights and privileges of citizenship." In Cranbury, New Jersey, the Reverend Joseph G. Symmes told his Presbyterians that Negroes may be too ignorant to vote, but the objection came poorly from those "who rush to thrust a ballot into the hand of every [Democratic?] foreigner." Presbyterians in Caldwell, New Jersey, heard their pastor, the Reverend I. N. Sprague, admit frankly that the Negro vote "will be needed, to counteract the foreign and Popish influence that is gaining such a strong foothold." For originality of expression the laurels belong to a fundamentalist preacher in Champlain, New York. Scorning a recently published book by Charles Darwin, the Reverend Robert B. Yard told his congregation of Methodist Episcopalians:

Men have willingly assumed the doctrine that the African race is not human . . . that the African was but a superior type of Orang Outang. The same class of reasoning was adopted years ago to prove that the Dutch originally were fish, which being left high and dry by the tide, gradually accommodated themselves to the change of circumstances. The tails being no longer useful gradually wore away. . . . The popular objections to the peculiar physical structure of the African are simply absurd. . . . The fact is unquestioned that if the negro be condemned on craniological principles, we must concede the highest type of female beauty, the statue of Venus, to represent the head of an idiot. It is claimed that the African has always been in subjection, when the truth is, that the negroes have never been conquered by the whites.<sup>3</sup>

Quite naturally radical politicians took advantage of every evidence of popular approval of Negro equality which strengthened the structure of their party. The line between Christian ethics and party politics is hard to draw in this instance. Vindictive reconstruction with Negro suffrage would save the party and at the same time soothe the most exacting conscience. The by-elections were a year and a half away. During that time party leaders might profit by watching or aggravating the sentiments of their constituents. Lincoln's body was taken back to Springfield with triumphal mourning, following almost the exact route the liv-

<sup>3</sup> Robert B. Yard, *The Providential Significance of the Death of Abraham Lincoln* . . . (Newark, New Jersey, [1865]), 11-12.

ing man had taken from the prairies to the White House. During the trip no tragic appeal to the populace was overlooked. Radical haters of the South, men who wanted "traitors" punished with the extreme penalty of the law, saw to it that Lincoln's corpse bore traces of the horror of assassination. Undertakers were denied the privilege of treating the dead man's skin to make it look as though he were asleep.<sup>4</sup> The people must see Lincoln in death—murdered by the Confederacy. A million people did see him in all his ghastliness and seven millions more, it was reported, watched at rural stations as the funeral train swept by. But, in spite of the studied drama, the passage of time healed the people's passions. The vindictiveness of the sermons preached after the first outburst on April 16 became less pronounced. On the first Sunday after the assassination 78 per cent of the sermons published recommended, as did the Reverend John Chester in Washington, D. C., that the government inflict "the heaviest penalties of the law on the unprincipled, unrepentant leaders and instigators of this rebellion." Ministers quoted at length from the Bible to show that people must suffer for their sins. The Reverend David Swing, who claimed to know God's will and certainly understood the people's, told his congregation at Hamilton, Ohio, "God is not willing that the voice of mercy shall be heard." This vindictiveness had begun to subside by prayer meeting night, April 19. The sermons, also published and preserved, of this later day disclose that only 72 per cent of the ministers retained their original rancor toward the South. The heat of rage was consuming itself. By June 1, the day set aside for humiliation and prayer by Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson, only 63 per cent of the sermons cried for vengeance. This was the last date on which funeral addresses were published in quantity, so this analysis cannot be carried further, but obviously the people's anger at the South was diminishing. Radical politicians would have to resort to some other stimulant to hold the advantage they had gained by the death of Lincoln. What they decided to do is a part of our political history.

Another noticeable thing about these funeral addresses was the spontaneous appearance of similar ideas at distances too great for easy plagiarism. Perhaps it was not remark-

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<sup>4</sup> Lloyd Lewis, *Myths after Lincoln* (New York, 1929), 122.

able for ministers to be struck by the coincidence of Lincoln's death on Good Friday. The Reverend Abraham Grater of Skippackville, Pennsylvania, was only one of many to call the attention of his congregation to the fact that Jesus and Lincoln both died to make men free. The Reverend Dr. Charles Cooke noted the same comparison in Smyrna, Delaware, and explained that the Savior of the World died for the sins of men, while the savior of the nation died for the sins of the South.

More remarkable was the spontaneous recognition of the fact that Lincoln's assassination resembled that of William the Silent, and that the United States would be united by it as the United Netherlands had been 250 years earlier. This simile, voiced in the New York legislature on the day Lincoln died, appeared in funeral sermons twenty-four hours later in Rhode Island, in Maine, and in Albany, New York.<sup>5</sup> Within a week the comparison was commonly used, even in remote places.<sup>6</sup>

Condemning the whole South for the act of madman Booth was also common in the vindictive sermons. Charles Sumner, leader of the Radicals who hoped to subjugate the South politically, told a Boston meeting, "But do not be too vindictive in heat towards the poor atom that held the weapon. Reserve your rage for the responsible power," and "Vote for me" he might have added. The Reverend Wilbur Paddock admonished his Philadelphians that Booth "was no more guilty than the pistol he held." The Reverend Samuel F. Miller, in a funeral oration at Franklin, New York, thundered, "Oh! let us not, in our desire to punish the accomplices and tools, allow the great criminal to escape." Jeff Davis and Robert E. Lee were pointed out by many divines as suitable figures to be killed in retaliation.<sup>7</sup> One good Presbyterian asked, "Who will be able to separate in thought

<sup>5</sup> Augustus Woodbury, *The Son of God calleth the Dead to life, A Sermon suggested by the assassination of Abraham Lincoln* . . . (Providence, Rhode Island, 1865), 23; Alfred E. Ives, *Victory Turned into Mourning* . . . (Bangor, Maine, 1865), 5-6; Alexander S. Twombly, *The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln* . . . (Albany, 1865), 15-16; Robert Davidson, *The Lessons of the Hour* . . . (Huntington, New York, 1865), 9.

<sup>6</sup> John Farquhar, *The Claims of God to Recognition in the Assassination of President Lincoln* . . . (Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1865), 4-5.

<sup>7</sup> J. W. Bain, *National Lessons from the Life and Death of President Lincoln* . . . (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1865), 5.



the murder of the President, from Davis' persistent effort to murder the Union?"<sup>8</sup> Marked originality was shown by the Reverend William Blackburn, at Trenton, New Jersey, when he blamed the assassination on the antiwar Democrats, the Copperheads. This may have been acceptable doctrine in New Jersey, but in Ohio, where a different public enemy threatened, the Reverend S. L. Yourtee was sure that the assassination plot "originated in the councils of the notorious Knights of the Golden Circle." With a gift for language worthy of a larger church the Reverend Mr. Yourtee summed up the Confederate effort to secede in memorable words: "Dissolve the Union, and you throw back the sun of civilization and redemption a thousand years on the dial-plate of time."

Culpability of the South for the deaths of other presidents before Lincoln was also pronounced from several pulpits simultaneously. The Reverend George Duffield, in a stinging sermon to the Presbyterians in Detroit, declared that agents of the South had administered slow poison to Presidents Harrison and Taylor and attempted by similar means to kill Buchanan. The South, he shouted angrily, starved Northern prisoners of war, and when this failed to make their deaths sufficiently loathsome, yellow fever was imported from the West Indies to finish the survivors. In North Colebrook, Connecticut, the Reverend William Goodwin told his congregation that two presidents and perhaps Douglas had been poisoned by the South—the South boasts it. This curious criminal record had been fixed on the South in 1864 by John Smith Dye in a horrendous paperback, *The Adder's Den*. Surely no minister of the gospel read such a scurrilous publication unless he considered it necessary to be informed and thus warn his flock.

Some clergymen pointed to Lincoln's assassination as a lesson for all sinful theatre-goers. The Reverend Joseph F. Tuttle, president of Wabash College, told worshippers at Crawfordsville, Indiana, that Lincoln would not have been killed had he abstained from the play as he did from liquor and narcotics. In Jacksonville, Illinois—Boston of the prairies—the Reverend Dr. Livingston Maturin Glover told Presbyterians,

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<sup>8</sup> Henry A. Nelson, *The Divinely Prepared Ruler . . .* (Springfield, Illinois, 1865), 32.

"God had a purpose but it is obscure—perhaps it was punishment for some error the people committed in the past. Perhaps it is a warning for the future . . . I confess myself incapable of reading the lesson at present."

Dr. Glover questioned the assumption that God permitted Lincoln to be killed for being out of His protection at the theatre. Other tolerant ministers deplored Lincoln's lapse without accusing God of smiting him for the sin. So in Bloomington, Indiana, the Reverend T. M. Hopkins regretted that Lincoln went to the theatre and in Schraalenberg, New Jersey, the Reverend W. R. Gordon thought it unfortunate that the catastrophe caught the President in the "Devil's Schoolhouse." Opposition to the stage was by no means restricted to the rural areas. In Washington, D. C., the Reverend Dr. Phineas D. Gurley, pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church which Lincoln attended, pointed out to his congregation that the horrid event branded the South as "the very spirit of darkness and of the pit" as well as suggesting "a lesson touching the character and influence of the theatre." In Washington the Reverend Charles H. Hall expressed his opinion by telling the worshippers at the Church of the Epiphany, "Brethren, I would that he had been a church-member."

Denominations with a highly trained clergy were profuse in apologies for Lincoln's cultural shortcomings. In New York, as might be expected, the Reverend Dr. John McClintock told filled pews at Saint Paul's, "Certainly it was not intellectual grandeur that so drew all hearts toward Lincoln." Before closing, the New Yorker also called his congregation's attention to the fact that Wall Street bought gold for a rise on receipt of the news of Lincoln's death. In Boston—Jacksonville of the seaboard—the New Yorker's appraisal of Lincoln's lack of intellectual grandeur was enhanced by a hint that the martyred President was stupid also, no subject even for limited education. "Our good President never knew, never could know," said the Reverend George C. Chaney, "the wickedness and spite of the enemies of his country."<sup>9</sup>

The most remarkable thing about all the sermons preached after Lincoln's assassination is the fact that scarcely any of them offer explanations acceptable three genera-

<sup>9</sup> Lewis, *Myths after Lincoln*, 114-115.

tions later. For vision, practicalness, and honest effort to make amends for Lincoln's tragic death, the Reverend Peter Russell, Episcopalian, was outstanding. In his sermon preached in Eckley, Pennsylvania, soon after the tragic news had been received, he said:

The people of the Southern section of our country have made large claims for the superiority of their civilization. . . . These claims are now on trial before the world. . . . "We wait to hear what they will say."

On June 1, the Reverend Russell reported (erroneously) to his congregation, "There is as yet no evidence that a single Christian minister of any body of Christian people raised his voice against it."<sup>10</sup>

With good reason the inflamed North believed the South a barbarous territory, subject for harsh repression. From town and city, East and West, came the oft-repeated theme that the assassination was a plea from God for sterner measures, an act of God to rouse the people to the danger of being lenient to traitors.<sup>11</sup> In Omaha the Reverend F. M. Dimmick asked himself one of those discursive questions ministers enjoy. "Was there danger in the clemency of his [Lincoln's] great heart?" In Philadelphia, the Reverend Reuben Jeffery concluded that God took Lincoln because his work was done. "Possibly, had he survived," the Reverend Frank L. Robbins told members of Greenhill Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, "his disposition would have inclined him to a too lenient policy toward the leaders of this atrocious rebellion." Also in Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love, majestic Phillips Brooks, with the tutored tongue of nine generations of praying men, blamed Lincoln's murder on the administration's "weak concessions and timid compromises." "I charge this murder where it belongs," he trumpeted above the upturned faces of worshippers in the Church of the Holy Trinity. "Teach it to your wondering children."

In East Saginaw, Michigan, the Reverend H. L. Morehouse preached that God permitted Lincoln's assassination to offset "a mawkish humanitarianism advocating plenary pardon. . . . Hanging is a word which shocks some ears.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Russell, *Our Great National Reproach* . . . (Philadelphia, 1865), 9, 25-26.

<sup>11</sup> Farquhar, *The Claims of God*, 18-19.

Treason in the highest, and rebellion against God shocks mine."

The Reverend William W. Olsen told his Scarsdale, New York, congregation, "Perhaps evil plottings have been now permitted to succeed because more is to be gained by the death than by the continued life of our President." The Reverend J. D. Pierce of North Attleboro, Massachusetts, also went on record as one who saw some benefit in Lincoln's death. "We think we can see that the probable course of President Lincoln in the sequel of the rebellion would not have commended itself to the . . . majority of his constituents," he told the Universalist congregation. "Is it not for him well, that he has been taken away while his garland was fresh and green? . . . Now, his reputation is secure." Rationalizing this thought on a higher plane, the Reverend William A. Snively told his followers, "It may be that the Infinite Wisdom saw that there was too much kindness in that great heart to meet the stern issues of penalty which justice demands." God removed Lincoln, the Reverend Mr. Snively concluded, to give place to one better "fitted to be the minister of vengeance." In Salem, Indiana, the Reverend H. R. Naylor said, "Perhaps the hour had come when one of harder heart, and more iron arm was necessary to fill the Executive chair to carry out God's will." The same consolation was expressed by the Reverend Richard B. Duane in Providence: "There was another danger into which we were drifting . . . even our beloved President himself. It was a mistaken leniency. . . . It is some comfort to know now that this danger at least has passed away."<sup>12</sup>

Vice-President Johnson's fitness to carry on received diverse appraisals. Radical preachers were reassured by Johnson's record. He had dared call secessionists "traitors" to their faces. On the other hand, Johnson had been reported on inauguration day to be under the influence of alcohol. He had been noisy on the platform, spoke incoherently, it was said. Preachers were baffled in their efforts to appraise such a man. The Reverend Henry E. Parker, in Concord, New Hampshire, expressed Puritanic misgivings. "It seems, at the least," he said, "a fearful experiment . . . to put the highest authority of this government into the

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<sup>12</sup> Richard B. Duane, *A Sermon preached in Saint John's Church* . . . (Providence, Rhode Island, 1865), 11.

hands of a man who has so recently and unutterably disgraced himself." Across in Vermont, the Brattleboro minister, Pliny H. White, had no such apprehensions. "Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep," he exulted. Andrew Johnson, he pointed out, was not elected President. "But while Abraham Lincoln was the choice of the people, Andrew Johnson was the choice of God. . . . If we cannot trust God to choose our Chief Magistrate for us, whom can we trust?" The Reverend Mr. White hoped that Johnson might be excused for being drunk on March 4. "In one particular the President has already shown himself entitled to our utmost confidence—his settled determination to exact justice to the guilty authors of the rebellion."

God's desire to remove Lincoln on account of his leniency was questioned by the skeptical Reverend S. L. Yourtee in Springfield, Ohio. "This may be even so, and it may not, we cannot tell," he concluded. In any event the South needed a ruler like "Beast" Butler and now they had one. "Moreover he [Johnson] has made a solemn pledge not to taste a drop of intoxicating liquor while he is President." At Schenectady the Reverend Denis Wortman also alleged that Lincoln's assassination was no cause for despair. "God . . . had a special work for our late President to do. That work is done. He has another work now perhaps, and for that other work appoints another man." "We will not cast him off for this single fault [of being drunk]. No!! No!!!"

Lincoln's wife's church in Springfield, Illinois, like the Presbyterian Church in Washington to which she later belonged, ranked with the vindictive pastorates. Both also failed to divine the immortality of Abraham Lincoln. Both were kind to the memory of the stricken man but both deplored his shortcomings. At Springfield, on the Sunday following Lincoln's burial, the Reverend Henry A. Nelson, Presbyterian pastor from Saint Louis, spoke the accepted ecclesiastical opinion of Lincoln's intelligence:

Doubtless more brilliant men than he have served the nation under his orders. Minds of more rapid movement, perhaps of greater comprehension, certainly of more varied and extensive learning, have aided his by their counsel.<sup>13</sup>

The Reverend Mr. Nelson may have formed his judgment

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<sup>13</sup> Nelson, *The Divinely Prepared Ruler*, 17.

on the testimony of Lincoln's neighbors. He was not personally acquainted with the deceased President. As a citizen, as well as a churchman, he had studied Lincoln's character and in doing so he discovered the thing that would impress the minds of three generations of Lincoln admirers; Nelson said:

I understand . . . that he had never here been known as a professor of religion. But that he was an honest believer . . . is generally understood; and . . . I may say that during the last two or three years, if not ever since his elevation to office, his published language and his public deportment have increasingly, and very decidedly impressed us as altogether becoming to a Christian.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.