

# LINCOLN LORE

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## LINCOLN LORE

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### REFERENCES TO RELIGION IN THE SECOND INAUGURAL

The Thanksgiving season encourages one to review some of the significant utterances of our American statesmen. There is not to be found in the archives of the nation an inaugural address by any of the presidents which reaches the eloquence of Lincoln's Second Inaugural remarks.

The *London Times* has called this effort "the most sublime state paper of the century." It is worthy to be placed in a class with the Gettysburg Address and the Bixby Letter.

At a time when the modern writer feels that he achieves the very heights of colorful expression by the use of the word "hell," it is refreshing to read some literature which has been couched in language that can be associated with more worthy sentiments.

While Lincoln often used Biblical quotations and acknowledged Deity to give strength and dignity to his thoughts, there is no better example of his devotional frame of mind than the memorable address delivered on March 4, 1865. This may properly be considered his own requiem for in less than six weeks from the date of its delivery he was dead.

One paragraph which it is necessary to omit from the copy exhibited in the opposite column because of lack of space shows how the theme of religion completely dominated the text.

"'Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses cometh.' If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through its appointed time, he now wills to remove, and that he gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to him?"

In the adjacent column the editor has taken the liberty to arrange some excerpts from the address in such a way that the context may be easily visualized, and more truly appreciated.

## LINCOLN'S SECOND INAUGURAL ADDRESS

\* \* \* \* \*

*On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago,  
all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war.  
All dreaded it—  
all sought to avert it.*

*While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place,  
devoted altogether to saving the Union without war,  
insurgent agents were in the city  
seeking to destroy it without war—  
seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation.*

*Both parties deprecated war;  
but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive;  
and the other would accept war rather than let it perish.  
And the war came.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*Neither party expected for the war  
the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained,  
Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict  
might cease with, or even before, the contest itself should cease.  
Each looked for an easier triumph,  
and a result less fundamental and astounding.*

*Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God;  
and each invokes his aid against the other.  
It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask  
a just God's assistance  
in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces;  
but let us judge not,  
that we be not judged.  
The prayers of both could not be answered—  
that of neither has been answered fully.  
The Almighty has his own purpose.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*Fondly do we hope—  
sincerely do we pray—  
that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away.  
Yet, if God will  
that it continue until all the wealth piled up  
by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil  
shall be sunk,  
and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash  
shall be paid  
by another drawn with the sword,  
as was said three thousand years ago,  
still it must be said,  
"The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."*

*With malice towards none;  
with charity for all;  
With firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right,  
let us strive on to finish the work we are in;  
to bind up the nation's wounds;  
To care for him who has borne the battle,  
and for his widow and his orphan—  
to do all which may achieve and cherish  
a just and lasting peace  
among ourselves and with all the nations.*