

PRESIDENT LINCOLN ON NATIONAL SIN
AND NATIONAL REPENTANCE

Call for a day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer

August 12, 1861.

Whereas it is fit and becoming in all people at all times to acknowledge
② and revere the supreme government of God, to bow in humble submission
to His chastisements, to confess and deplore their sins and transgressions ④
① in the full conviction that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
and to pray with all fervency and contrition for the pardon of their past
offences and for a blessing upon their present and prospective action; and

Whereas when our own beloved country, once by the blessing of God,
united, prosperous, and happy, is now afflicted with faction and civil war,
it is peculiarly fit for us to recognize the hand of God in this terrible
visitation, and in sorrowful remembrance of our own faults and crimes
① as a nation and as individuals to humble ourselves before Him and to pray ⑧
for His mercy—to pray that we may be spared further punishment,
though most justly deserved; that our arms may be blessed and made
effectual for the reestablishment of law, order, and peace throughout the
wide extent of our country; and that the inestimable boon of civil and
religious liberty, earned under His guidance and blessing by the labors
and sufferings of our fathers, may be restored in all its original ex-
cellence:

Therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do
appoint

The famous Harlan resolution adopted by the Senate March 2, 1863

① Resolved, That, devoutly recognizing the supreme authority and just
government of Almighty God in the affairs of men and of nations, and
sincerely believing that no people, however great in numbers and re-
sources, or however strong in the justice of their cause, can prosper
without His favor, and at the same time deploring the national offenses
which provoked His righteous judgment, yet encouraged, in this day of
trouble, by the assurance of His word, to seek Him for succor according
to His appointed way, through Jesus Christ, the Senate of the United
States do hereby request the President of the United States by his
proclamation to designate and set apart a day for national prayer and
humiliation

Consequent call to a day of Humiliation and Prayer

March 30, 1863.

Whereas the Senate of the United States, devoutly recognizing the supreme authority and just government of Almighty God in all the affairs of men and nations, has by a resolution requested the President to designate and set apart a day of prayer and humiliation; and

Whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven in all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord; Psalm 33:12

And, insomuch as we know that by His divine law nations, like individuals, are subjected to punishments in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war which now desolates the land may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people? We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace too proud to pray to the God who made us.

It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness . . .

A Call to Thanksgiving for Victory

July 15, 1863.

Now, therefore, be it known that I do set apart Thursday, the 6th day of August next, to be observed as a day of national thanksgiving, praise, and prayer, and I invite the people of the United States to as-

semble on that occasion in their customary places of worship and in the forms approved by their own consciences to render the homage due to the Divine Majesty for the wonderful things He has done in our nation's behalf and to invoke the presence of His Holy Spirit to subdue the anger which has produced and so long sustained a needless and cruel rebellion, to change the hearts of the insurgents, to guide the counsels of the Government with wisdom adequate to so great a national emergency, and to visit with tender care and consolation throughout the length and breadth of our land all those who, through the vicissitudes of marches, voyages, battles, and sieges, have been brought to suffer in mind, body, or estate, and finally to lead the whole nation through the paths of repentance and submission to the divine will back to the perfect enjoyment of union and fraternal peace.

From a Thanksgiving Proclamation October 3, 1863.

"No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy."

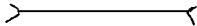
From Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural March 4, 1865.

If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His 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 offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently 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 by the bondman'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, so still it must be said, "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

Principles of National Religion

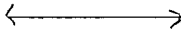
Found in the foregoing State Papers of Abraham Lincoln

1. God deals with nations as with individuals.
2. It is the duty of nations, as well as of men, to acknowledge their dependence upon the power and goodness of Almighty God.
3. Nations should not in their prosperity forget the God who made them prosperous.
4. Nations may and do sin against God and may suffer under divine judgments.
5. God punishes national sin with exact justice.
6. God punishes national sin to bring nations to repentance and reformation.
7. The Holy Spirit can change rebellious hearts, guide the counsels of the government and console the afflicted.
8. Humiliation, confession of sin and prayer are God's way out of national judgments.
9. The united and sincere cry of a nation for pardon of sin will be heard on high and answered with forgiveness and peace.
10. Those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.



The United States suffered greatly from the World War with all its cost of blood and treasure. We have had nine years of the most severe depression known in modern times. We have suffered from a great drought which has affected some of the most fertile parts of our country.

Is not God dealing with this nation to bring us to repentance for our sins?



The Witness Committee

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