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### Lincoln and Leviticus

After the midterm national elections this past November when the Democrats took control of both branches of our legislative bodies, the wonderful writer, Anna Quindlen, wrote the following in her “Newsweek” essay: “Ultimately the Republicans lost the confidence of even some of their own because the stranglehold of the radical religious right changed them from the party of Lincoln to the party of Leviticus.”

Yes, many have asked, some right here, how is it that the Grand Old Party has evolved so far from its historical roots to become identified as the party of anti-abortion, anti-embryonic stem cell research, anti-gay marriage, anti-evolution, and anti-environmental concerns?

The most frequently heard answer is because their party’s largest constituency is from the religious far right who believe the United States was founded as a Christian nation and who believe we need to reclaim that identity if we are to be blessed by God.

Agree with that or not, and the hackles of some here may already be raised, I would like to visit such a concern. The question is can either of our main parties claim to be more righteous than the other? And what of our thirty-two other registered political parties? Of these, the main challenges come from the Libertarian Party and its individualism, and the Green Party with a platform I personally agree with. But is there a stealth Fundamentalist Religious Party that seeks to trump them all?

My main reason for joining the Literary Club was not simply the opportunity to write. I have come forth with a paper every Sunday for my adult life. What made Robert Hilton’s invitation compelling was to be part of something other than a faith community, and to hear what was on the minds of such a diverse body, and occasionally to have my say.

I have delivered four papers and have on several occasions been asked to lead the Club in prayer. I don’t believe anything I said, though surely opinionated, reflected a religious sectarian view. Nor do I wish this paper to be such. But I need to be careful with what follows, for I am hardly identified with the religious right.

Still, I was touched by Quindlen’s literary conjunction, “from the party of Lincoln to the party of Leviticus” and I immediately thought there’s a paper here, first to examine its truth and, second, to explore what is the appropriate, beneficial, and necessary place of religious convictions in our secularly constituted state – a secular government I pray we will always retain.

First, a brief look at Leviticus, the third book of Hebrew scripture, variously embraced by Jews, Christians, and Moslems. While Leviticus embodies many of the 613 commandments found in the Hebrew Scriptures, at its heart is a concern for holiness. As its key text states, “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.”19:2

Holiness, surely most of us would admit, is a difficult attainment. It is usually framed in the context of purity and the need to separate one’s self from anything that is unclean. Strict purity systems are found in many cultures and they set persons apart from others.

Distinct classes of persons inevitably develop. The pure and impure. The clean and unclean. The righteous and the unrighteous. Who is acceptable and who is not. Who is on God’s side and who is an infidel.

Leviticus has much to say about this. The book was written around the 6<sup>th</sup> Century before the Common Era after the Hebrews were freed from bondage by Cyrus of Persia. They return to Judah to rebuild their temple and developed, under the priests, a strict orthodoxy in order to be a separate, holy, and favored people of their God.

Some of its laws are very severe, such as death for cursing your parents, for adultery, or blaspheming the name of God. Slavery was permitted but not of your own people. It also contains a strange list of foods, deemed pure and impure, and other prohibitions such as mixed breeding of cattle, sowing fields with different kinds of seed, and wearing garments of cloth made of different material. No tattoos, either!

Anna Quindlen’s reference to Leviticus probably had something to do with its declaration that same-sex practice was an abomination and persons so involved should be put to death. In a personal communiqué with me she said she had referenced Leviticus because she saw it to be the “shall-not book of the Bible” and not just about sex but for “placing strictures on everything from what we eat to what we wear.”

There are, of course, many commands regarding justice and fairness in Leviticus. Jesus quoted Leviticus only once, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” which he thought was essential, inclusive, and universal in its application.

We should also note that the inscription on our Liberty Bell, “Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.” is from Leviticus.

Regardless, Leviticus is severe and quite demanding in all details of life, even though only a few seek to follow it today and none fully.

The real question regarding those who would live by the Bible, or for that matter the Koran, is which of these particular ancient texts do you wish to live by? Those words of exclusion and condemnation, or those that speak of justice and compassion, equally distributed to all?

We are rightly alarmed today that certain Islamic terrorists find in the Koran support and justification for their terrorist jihads, but it would be unfair not to also note that similar and even more detailed terror texts are found in the Bible itself. The fact is, Leviticus can be used to teach love or it can be used to teach hate. When it comes to sacred scriptures of any kind, most of us do something like Jefferson did: cut and paste – to separate, as he said, “the diamonds from the dung.”

Perhaps by the title of this paper, “Lincoln and Leviticus,” and you were acquainted with this third book of the Bible, you might have thought I would be discussing recent literature that strongly suggests Lincoln’s own homosexuality. While homosexuality, as an orientation, was not understood by the authors of Leviticus, or hardly so in Lincoln’s time, I have looked into such a claim and I don’t think that the case has been made of Lincoln. And while, as I offered in a paper here over six years ago, I believe there is nothing wrong with homosexual behavior in and of itself, that is not a primary concern of this paper, except to say such sexual practice does seem to have divided our two main political parties today.

My main concern was to examine Quindlen’s belief that the Republican Party would be healthier if it would leave a Leviticus style of legislating morality behind and emulate more its party’s first President – and so to Lincoln I turn.

In doing so, what I discovered was that Lincoln was much more complicated a person and far different from the simple myths I grew up with.

And as I went on and on in my own examination of Lincoln, I became aware that the three titles we usually bestowed on him: “The Savior of the Union”, “The Great Commoner”, and “The Great Emancipator”, though all true, require great qualification.

Foremost, Lincoln certainly did save the Union.

As he left Springfield for Washington, his concern to save the Union at all cost had several arguments. I place them in ascending order as to their merit, though they were all constitutionally dubious at the time.

First, Lincoln didn’t think the geography of our land could support two “national families” side by side.

Second, he thought secession to be the “essence of anarchy.” If one state or states were to secede it would encourage others and even those that seceded would be vulnerable to secession *ad infinitum*.

Third, he believed that the Union, once firmly established, no one state was able to violate it even if a state found a majority within itself to do so. Secession, he argued, required the majority approval of all in the Union.

Fourth, he believed that the Union did not provide for its own termination, that is, its own demise.

Fifth, even if revolution were a right as in the case of the United States, it must have a morally justifiable cause, and keeping slavery did not meet the moral test.

Sixth, and above all, given that the United States was really the only democratic republic existing anywhere else in the world, Lincoln felt that secession would nullify the very principles embodied in our Declaration and Constitution and would set back what was, as he said, the best “hope to the world for all future time.”

But regardless of many proposed compromises offered to those threatening withdrawal, the issue really was out of Lincoln’s hand when he became President. The South was seceding.

One might look back and say “What if?” Robert Dorsey gave an excellent paper here about possible alternative scenarios to the many wars we have been engaged in, including the Civil War. And he pondered if this uncivil nightmare could have been prevented?

Harry Stout in his recent book, *Upon the Altar of the Nation*, asked a similar question. “Was the Civil War just?” He concludes “that the right side won in *spite of itself*.” “In too many instances,” given the principles embedded in just war theories, he adds, “both sides descended into moral misconduct.”

Even though this is a history we should never whitewash, Lincoln felt he had only one choice now that secession was occurring. His policy, however costly it would be, was set; and it can be understood briefly in his famous reply to the anti-slavery champion Horace Greeley:

I mean not to “leave anyone in doubt,” Lincoln wrote to Greeley, “My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that.”

Three years after Lincoln’s death, the Supreme Court would rule in *Texas v. White* that the Union was indissoluble, as we hope it remains today.

In the end, Lincoln never budged on two issues he disagreed with: the right of states to secede from the union and the expansion of slavery. He was The Savior of the Union.

Secondly, Lincoln was The Great Emancipator but, he was not the great integrationist.

Clearly Lincoln subordinated the issue of slavery to the saving of the Union. But it is also evident what he thought of slavery. “If slavery is not wrong,” he said, “nothing is wrong.”

At the end of the last of the seven Lincoln – Douglas debates, Lincoln framed the question in the context of good versus evil. “No matter in what shape (slavery) comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to bstride the people of his own nation and live by the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race, it is the same tyrannical principle.”

Clearly Lincoln did believe that the black person had the same inalienable rights as any person, and he dedicated himself to the proposition that “all men were created equal.” And Lincoln meant it as equally and universally as in Genesis – that all persons are made in the image of God.

But he also believed that blacks were not equally endowed because of the circumstances of their history, especially with the white race. Even the great champions of equality of his day, William Seward and Salmon Chase, had similar beliefs.

When Lincoln, in the course of the war, invited a group of black leaders to the White House, (the first President to do so), he made this distinction clear. His message to them was that there were insurmountable differences between his race and their own. He told them, even though they had endured “the greatest wrong inflicted on any people,” he felt even when they were freed they would not really be free as they would still not be accepted as equals or be able to prosper with the white race as they should.

Consequently he offered them a new colonization plan. Iberia, in Africa, already had been established for that purpose, but he offered them what he thought a better option in Central America.

Lincoln’s resettlement plan, of course, was, quickly and rightly rejected by the black leadership and Frederick Douglas, the most notable black leader of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, caustically assaulted Lincoln’s view of his own “pride of race and blood,” to be “contemptible and ridiculous.”

It is hard to imagine today that Lincoln thought such a drastic segregation plan as colonization was a viable option to racism in America. But he was not alone, for most of the country thought that to be the best option as did Jefferson, Madison, Jackson and John Marshall.

It is evident that Lincoln’s great sense of empathy, which he had always displayed for others, failed him here; and near the end of his life he confessed such a plan to be, in his words, “a hideous and barbaric humbug.”

Still, even before Lincoln saw his foolishness, Frederick Douglas would claim that Lincoln was “emphatically the black man’s President.” Douglas went on to say that Lincoln “was the first great man that I talked with in the United States freely, who in no single instance reminded me of the difference between himself and myself.” Douglas would say even further that he found Lincoln free of the “entire popular prejudice against the color race.” Of course, Lincoln was not entirely free of racism, but it would be good if what Douglas said of Lincoln could be said of each of us today.

Lincoln, under the authority of his war powers, did sign the Emancipation Proclamation. But we often forget that only freed slaves in the Confederacy and not the slaves in states that had not seceded. Lincoln knew he had no constitutional powers to do so. But he did twist the arms in congress to pass the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment permanently outlawing slavery. His greatest critics agree Lincoln made that possible.

Even so, it would await someone other than Lincoln to become the great leader of civil rights and racial integration in this country. One would come along who, like Lincoln, cherished the Declaration and the Constitution and acted in deepest respect for both – one Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. We must remember this country was not built in a day, and it is not finished.

So even though Lincoln was not the great integrationist, he was the Great Emancipator. John Wilkes Booth thought so.

Thirdly, he was the Great Commoner. Actually even this title must be questioned for he was really uncommon in so many ways. Still, he would be adopted by populist movements every where, and he adorns, yet, our common penny.

This undoubtedly was due to the poverty of his youth, his log cabin upbringing, the fact that he had only one year of schooling, and that he believed a laborer was due his fair wage.

But he was not only considered the great commoner for his humble beginnings, but also for the humility he exercised all his life, as well as for his unyielding rejection of the notion that whites had the right to rule blacks.

Although he was our first Republican President, and before that a member of the Whig Party, many today would insist on also calling him “The Great Democrat.”

Certainly he was honest Abe, and that, in political circles, made him uncommon indeed! And uncommon he was also in his religious outlook; more like Washington, Adams, Jefferson and Franklin, than a mainline Christian.

Lincoln’s education was primarily from the books he borrowed, and, and from them, he was deeply affected by the Enlightenment. With Jefferson, he believed that reason was his altar.

Lincoln was further uncommon in that he didn’t drink, smoke, gamble and disliked hunting. What was also rare about him was his ability to forgive even his enemies. And given his understanding of human failings, he was reluctant to judge persons.

Lincoln didn’t hate Southerners, in many ways he grew up as one, but the measure of his grace regarding his understanding of God and his attitude towards humanity, can be seen in his Second Inaugural address, delivered a short time before his assassination.

It is worth repeating this evening. “Both,” Lincoln said, meaning the Union and Confederacy, “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 purposes.”

Lincoln knew it would avail us all not to believe God was on our side but only to pray we were on His. He ended his brief inaugural address with these revered words, words that need to be said today from both sides of the aisle:

“With malice toward 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 shall have 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 nations.”

Frederick Douglas, told Lincoln after his speech, “That was a sacred effort.” And, indeed, it was.

So Lincoln the Great Commoner was really uncommonly a commoner. This is made clear through the countless books written about him, mostly favorable, some critical, but all describing him differently. But that is true of all great souls and Lincoln, as so many have attested, wore his soul inside out.

As president, the principles of our Founders' documents were the highest authority by which Lincoln lived. Based on these principles, his address at Gettysburg forever shaped a new path for this country, even beyond our country's Founders.

In affirming America's civil religion, his three minute speech at that battlefield was not only to become America's greatest sermon, but also our nation's most sacred civil text.

Anna Quindlen is right that it would be good for the Republican Party to reclaim Lincoln, just as it would be for any party.

None of us today, which I would now focus on, would deny that honesty and humility are much needed in both our political realm and equally so from those who speak with a religious voice. And regardless of our political affiliation, it is just as obvious that this November's mid-term election changed our political and religious landscape. There was a pendulum swing, as Quindlen noted. And for the first time in our history last November brought into Congress two Buddhists, one Muslim, and more Jews even than Episcopalians.

Certainly this midterm election differed from the Presidential Election of two years earlier. For that election, as no election before, was decisively decided by religious or so called, moral values.

Two things in that election stood out. Persons who attended worship services most regularly voted substantially for the President and his party. And further, even though John Kerry is a Roman Catholic, for the first time in our history more Catholics voted for the Republican candidate.

What became obvious was that a great cultural war, not just in the Mid-East, but on our own shores, so colorfully depicted as Red and Blue states, was in full force. And it was, and is, a battle between far right religionists and the mainline, less orthodox believers and non-believers – between religious conservatives and religious liberals. And the former seem better organized and far more numerous.

The New York Times religious columnist, Peter Steinfels, framed the debate, when he asked, “Why is there so much fascination with the so-called God gap, the finding that the more religiously observant Americans are, the more likely they are to vote Republican? Or, to put it the other way around, the more secular Americans are, the more likely they are to vote Democratic?” --

While much of the secular behavior in our land does seem inane, degenerate, materialistic, and less than virtuous, religious convictions, too, can use some cleansing, some re-baptizing. Besides, what constituency, religious or secular, has a copyright on moral values?

Regardless, after the 2004 Presidential election, religion became and remains the hot issue. Endless articles sought to understand and resolve this political-religious divide. Quickly, the Democrats tried to improve their religious vocabulary. And now, all the emerging presidential candidates have hired religious advisors.

Books were swiftly published. Kevin Phillip in his *American Theocracy – The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion*, warned that we were closer to a religious take over of our country than ever before.

The President’s earlier campaign proclamation that Christ “was his favorite philosopher” was re-examined in all the media and many wondered if whatever that portended had now come to pass.

Jon Meacham, the editor of “Newsweek” tried hard to balance the religious extremes in his book, *American Gospel*, by highlighting the delicate balance between the secular and religious values that have long held this country together. But even he was worried.

Jim Wallis, an evangelical Christian, came out with his best seller, *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It*.

Forty prominent religious leaders of all faiths and 40,000 others signed a petition claiming that "God is not a Republican, or a Democrat."

But it was clear to many, and especially to the historic main line denominations of this country – Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Methodists, Congregationalists – that the religious right had become the most powerful and prominent voice of American Christianity. Even though these mainline denominations, as well as the Catholic Church and most Jewish groups, came out with official announcements against the imminent invasion of Iraq, they were hardly listened to.

My own denomination's Presbyterian General Assembly voted that our invasion of Iraq was "unwise, immoral, and illegal." But that voice was muted even in our local congregations. Clearly though, the Administration did listen to a host of religious figures from the far right, such as Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Dr. James Dodson, and, every administration's insider, Billy Graham.

The ascendancy of the far right religious-political movement in our land began back in the early seventies with the Christian Coalition and the Moral Majority, mostly rallying around issues of abortion and homosexuality.

Not since the Civil War, have so many pulpits stated or implied, and not just from the far right, which candidates they favored – this in spite of the fact that outright endorsement by religious groups who wish to keep their tax free status is against the law.

And if not from their pulpits, ministers did so openly in the media such as when Jerry Falwell declared before the 2004 election, "It is the responsibility of every political conservative, every evangelical Christian, every pro-life Catholic, every traditional Jew, every Reagan Democrat, and everyone in between, to get serious about re-electing President Bush." Of course, every one has the right to their opinion.

We have seen this new religious activism in our own city when a few years back, the local Christian Coalition successfully promoted an amendment to Article XII of our City Charter which legally stated that gays and lesbians have no protected status in our city. It took ten years to correct this unfairness.

Recently emerging are sizeable groups throughout our nation, called the Dominionists or the Reconstruction Movement, who go even further in their religious zeal. Their stated purpose is take control of every political office and to turn our government into a theocracy, a Christian nation. Their agenda is to enact the laws of Leviticus, except those laws superseded by the New Testament. They sound like the Taliban or the hard fundamentalist of any religion.

These groups are a far cry from the man who said as a welcome to our land, let “the oppressed & persecuted of all nations and religions – Mohometans, Jews, Christians of any sect, or atheist...participate in all this country’s rights & privileges.” Yes, so said George Washington.

There is also an increasing effort by the far right to portray our founders as orthodox Christians. But such historical revisionism is simply not true. Washington, Franklin, Adams, Jefferson, Madison and Monroe were not orthodox in their beliefs and differed greatly from those who are singing today “give me that old time religion.” Nor was Lincoln, whose faith was more like the Founders.

Yes, these our Founders, were remarkable, even noble persons, and they all seemed to know the scriptures better than the average person today. They did align themselves with churches but their theological beliefs varied widely.

Most of the Founders were influenced by Deism which held reason to be the key to understanding truth. They felt nature itself exhibited God’s providential care for all. Most had left Puritanism behind and accepted a Unitarian view of God. Jefferson abhorred religious dogmatism and was considered by many to be a heretic, as do far right Christians do to this day. This in spite of the fact that he openly confessed that “the precepts of Jesus as delivered by himself, to be the most pure, benevolent, and sublime which have ever been preached to mankind.”

Above all, the Founders, and their spouses, valued freedom of conscience and opposed all forms of religious tyranny. They accepted diversity and were more inclusive of others than many who are religious today.

Of course the genius of the Founders was that they created a secular government with no religious test for office. And most importantly, they included the free exercise of religion in the Constitution.

I believe there has been no greater spiritual or moral value written into law than that contained in the First Amendment to the Constitution. Without it, each state would probably decide its own religion and who could be a faithful citizen. Without it, we would undoubtedly be involved in bloody religious wars which have plagued history, and continue even today. Before the First Amendment, heretics could be burned. After it, their voice was protected.

It has been said, “The First Amendment was a most auspicious addition to the Constitution.” Where can you find that? It is on the American Atheist’s web page. And we should rejoice with them.

After the religious impact of the 2004 election, and the rise of the Islamic extremists, atheists and other non religionists are speaking out more strongly than ever. They cry out with Voltaire who warned, “Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities.”

Several books by atheists are currently on the best seller list. Among them, Sam Harris's *The End of Faith*, and Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion*, are particularly scathing. While these writers cherry pick the most bizarre religious attitudes to discuss, and they disclose little that most religious scholars have not themselves criticized, they are worth a quick revue.

A better read, that is just as scathing in regard to religion, is Thomas Paine's, *The Age of Reason*. Paine, at least, doesn't remove God from the creation. Lincoln and Jefferson embraced many of Paine's views.

But who among us cannot criticize many religious views? For instance, "Homosexuality is a sin. Islam is a lie. Abortion is murder" are all religious beliefs of some. One 12-year-old in Ohio actually wore these beliefs on his tee-shirt at school. The school board ruled he could not, but the boy was successfully defended in court because these were determined to be his religious beliefs.

Of course, such an example only highlights the thin and sticky line of separation between the free exercise of religion and that of civil order which will continue to be with us. But we cannot count on the FDA, which seeks to assure us of truth in packaging, to analyze religious packages as to their truthfulness, bigotry, and unhealthiness. These we must address ourselves.

One of the most gifted of Biblical theologians, who gets very little media attention, Roman Catholic John Dominic Crossan, has written that if God is portrayed as something other than just and equitable and without a heart of compassion, such a deity should be dethroned. What for? "For transcendental malfeasance in office – fired because of divine malpractice."

Obviously, in a country with 90% believers in God, religion will not go away. And I do agree with Supreme Court Justice William Douglas in *Zarach v. Clauson* that "We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being." Even so, since "No one is an expert on God," as theologian John Macquarrie has said, some humility, as Lincoln displayed, is in order.

On the other hand, to be secular, or worldly, doesn't mean to live without any virtues but rather to be a rational and moral agent, to choose and be responsible for one's actions, to follow one's conscience, and to affirm one's duty to others.

Is there an alternative to religion? I doubt it. It will be with us until the end of the ages. Religion is what we are ultimately serious about and the need to value more than just ourselves.

Surely, religious sanctuaries surely should be places committed to making persons less shallow. But where religious faith comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable, let it increase.

And it must be said, before I, too, sound like a basher of religion, that every effort towards equality and justice in our country, as well as aide and comfort for the poor, the marginalized, the ill, and dispossessed, has had strong and courageous religious leadership.

Allen Orr, the noted evolutionary biologist recently wrote, “No decent person can fail to be repulsed by the sins committed in the name of religion” but he rightly adds the “the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s...experiment in secularism...(resulted in its own brand of evil), “an evil that, if anything, was more spectacularly virulent than that which came before.”

I would add that the great definition of religion was summed up, not in Leviticus, but in the Book of Micah. And what is it? Do justice, and be steadfast in love, and with God, walk humbly. That, of course, will always have ethical and political consequences.

Sin, I might further suggest, can be understood not simply as a matter of those moral imperfections that we all trip over again and again. Sin is really a form of arrested self-development, the failure to become whole, to become a human being and not a beast, to grow into a love that is expansive not restrictive, to discover that a massive soul is healthier than an enlarged ego. That was Lincoln’s journey in life.

Of course, love for one’s self is in order, but in a society love is completed only with our neighbor, who is, as Lincoln reaffirmed, our equal.

We will hear a lot about religion in this next election. But, since the presidential election of 2004, much is being re-evaluated. Even the sluggish main line churches are going through major transformations. Recently 10,000 clergy signed on to conduct an Evolution Sunday Service to witness that science and religion need not be incompatible. Evangelical churches, here and there, are also reassessing their ministries as being too moralistic and too absolute in their judgments.

While I do appreciate Anna Quindlen’s conclusion that Republican’s should re-embrace their first president, I leave these religious-political conundrums with you. How else? But let me finish with this lectern-pulpit, to offer two closing texts worthy of consideration.

The first comes from a secular source, the stated Principles of the Gates Foundation which, with the additional generous gift of Warren Buffet, now gives away over three billion dollars each year. And what moral values do they use as their criterion? There are three.

1. That all lives have equal value.
2. That to those much is given, much is expected.
3. That all persons have the chance for a healthy and productive life.

That's a secular agenda but certainly in keeping with the religious story of the Good Samaritan.

And last, a text, from Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize recipient.

“In God's family, there are no outsiders. All are insiders. Black and white, rich and poor, gay and straight, Jew and Arab, Palestinian and Israeli, Roman Catholic and Protestant, Serb and Albanian, Hutu and Tutsi, Muslim and Christian, Buddhist and Hindu, Pakistani and Indian – all belong. God's dream wants us to be brothers and sisters, wants us to be one family. In our world we can only survive together.”

Gentlemen, it is good that we have three branches of government, and competing political parties. But it will even be better when those who seek office, from any party, do so without believing that they have God on their side. Lincoln knew better.