

## **LINCOLN ESSAY by Lillian Dear**

At the beginning of his second term, President Lincoln used his second inaugural address as a speech of reconciliation in order to reunite the people of the North and South while the war raged on. Through a careful selection of words, Lincoln pointed out similarities between the North and the South and whose guilt for the war was shared. He asked a question that seems to be an explanation and delivered his course of action to achieve a “lasting peace”.

As a gifted speaker and respected leader, President Lincoln chose to address how both parties went to war, since one “would make war” and “the other would accept war”. While he expressed that the South’s powerful slave interest was the object over which the war was fought, Lincoln was careful not to place blame on the South alone. He also implied that the Union allowed slavery by territory and both sides shared the guilt of war. The goal was to bring both parties together and unify the wounded country. As a Christian nation, President Lincoln pointed out another likeness in which both Northerner and Southerner alike would “read the same Bible, and pray to the same God.”

Although Abraham Lincoln was not a “religious” man, he read the Bible, studied and quoted the scriptures. This knowledge of the scriptures taught Lincoln to think deeply and trust in God. In the third paragraph of the address, Lincoln raised a question about “American Slavery” where both North and South were guilty of the “offense” or sin. He went on to suppose that God had seen and allowed this sin to continue and “He now wills” to end slavery. He brought His judgment on the sinners, North and South,

through the punishment of war. Lincoln finally stated the question, asking that if God had allowed all this evil, were we to believe that He was not the just, compassionate, merciful and loving God who possessed these attributes? “The judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether” quoted by Lincoln, reassured his listeners that God always does what is right.

President Lincoln demonstrated his gifted speaking ability and strong leadership skills as he laid out a plan, through his second inaugural address, to unite a broken nation. He instructed all people to do what was right and accept the responsibility to work together and heal the country. “To bind up the nation’s wounds” meant to care for all those who had been affected by the war, and do everything possible to achieve peace.

At the beginning of President Abraham Lincoln’s second term for the presidency, he realized that the responsibility of reconciling a divided nation was in his hands. In addressing the nation at his inauguration, he took the opportunity to recognize the similarities of both North and South, to explain the intervention of God’s will with regard to the war and present his plan to achieve a “lasting peace” by speaking directly to the hearts and minds of his fellow man.