

IT WOULD seem to me, after all that has happened to the United States since Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, that the partialities of area and the prejudices of geography would have disappeared. But it is not so. If anything, sectionalism is being intensified, possibly as a reaction to the increased power and authority of the Federal Government.



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Of all our Presidents, Abraham Lincoln stands out boldly as our greatest in mind and spirit. He can no longer be claimed by any political party because his intellectual guidance was universal and what he sought to give his Nation was a moral basis for political existence. And it is a curious fact of history that nations which are not founded on a system of morality do not survive periods of great stress, particularly periods of external pressure.

Carlyle, writing of Burns, makes the point:

"... We hope there is a patriotism founded on something better than prejudice; that our country may be dear to us, without injury to our philosophy; that in loving and justly prizing all other lands, we may prize justly, and yet love before all others, our own stern motherland, and the venerable structure of social and moral life, which mind has through long ages been building up for us there..."

UNFORTUNATELY in the terrific speed of our material advances, we have only too often forgotten that no nation can live by things alone, by its vast stockpiles alone, because at the moment of stress, there

must be a moral force that sustains an entire people and holds them together. Simply stated, there must be a reason for continuing to exist as a people, separate, distinct, different and very proud of its achievements.

We have witnessed a decay from the stability of life after World War I, speeded up and accelerated during and after World War II. But today, in most countries, including our own, the trend toward stabilization is not only obvious but visible. We are on the verge of a moral resurrection.

Abraham Lincoln's problems were not as much political as they were moral. His most profound writings were moral. The two most quoted and therefore best known, the "Gettysburg Address" and the "Second Inaugural," are moral documents breathing the spirit of equity and justice and at no point containing one word of hate. Lincoln was incapable of hate.

IT IS significant that we celebrate the birthdays of only two of our numerous Presidents, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Washington fought to make us a free people and he laid down the pattern for our personality as a Nation; Lincoln bound the wounds of dissension and disbelief together and therefore preserved us a Nation. But mere preservation would have been insufficient to carry us through difficult years and these past three wars. We needed something more. We needed a doctrine of Americanism. Somehow, despite the efforts of many to debunk our creed and to laugh at patriotism, we have survived all their diversions and again we are standing solidly together, not on a political but on a moral basis.

We believe in human liberty. We accept that doctrine as a grace of God and therefore permanent, changeless, constant.

We reject slavery. We reject the power of the state to restrict the freedom of the individual.

It is on that moral issue that Abraham Lincoln stood.