

Box 4.12: Gettysburg Address and Second Inaugural

Gettysburg Address

On November 18, 1863, Abraham Lincoln delivered a speech at the dedication of the Soldier's National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Second Inaugural Address

On March 4, 1865, Lincoln gave this speech on the occasion of his inauguration to a second term as president. After a few administrative remarks, Lincoln noted that four years earlier when he first took the oath of office,

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.

One eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it.

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 conflict 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 purposes.



Maryland, September 1862. Photography was new in the Civil War, and images like this one brought home the horrors of war. Abraham Lincoln "highly resolve[d]" that "these dead shall not have died in vain."

liberator. Lincoln returned to Washington, D.C., where on April 14, 1865, he was assassinated by a Southern sympathizer. In life, Lincoln had often been mocked for his homely appearance and backwoods manners, but now a nation in mourning honored him as their fallen savior. The fact that he was shot on Good Friday was not lost on a religious public.

After the Civil War

At a very high cost, the Civil War preserved the Union and ended slavery. At least 620,000 soldiers died in the war—not only “in glorious battle for a sacred cause” but from disease and disaster. The South lay in ruins, and the future of some four million freed slaves was unknown. As the smoke lifted and the dead were buried,

Americans sought a religious meaning for the war. For example, Christian educator Horace Bushnell saw the bloodshed as creating a new America, “God’s own nation.” Bushnell believed that the Civil War prepared the United States for a redemptive mission in the world. This view provided a religious and moral framework for American foreign policy through the two world wars.²⁸

But few Southern whites could accept the “nation reborn” interpretation of the war; after all, *their* nation, the Confederacy, was no more. Nor could Southern defeat be explained merely on the basis of Union military might, since Southern armies had won many a battle against Union forces superior in numbers to the Confederates. One explanation that gained currency in the South was this: the Southern practice of slavery had failed to meet biblical standards,

Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" 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—ferently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man'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.

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.

and therefore God allowed white "stewardship" over slaves to be taken away.²⁹ Southern society would soon find ways to assert white claims to supremacy, but without the institution of slavery.

After winning the war, the federal government now had to win the peace. That meant bringing the Southern states back into a Union without slavery. This transition, called Reconstruction, lasted from 1865 to 1876. There was conflict over what Reconstruction should do. Lincoln's successor, President Andrew Johnson (a Tennessean) wanted the Southern states to reenter the Union on easy terms, leaving whites in control. But "radical Republicans" in the North insisted that the federal government must define and protect the rights of freed slaves. Ulysses S. Grant, elected president in 1868, was more sympathetic to the radical program of economic, social, and political reform.

Reconstruction brought the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1870, guaranteeing the right of male citizens to vote regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. The Civil Rights Act of 1875 declared that all persons should have

"equal enjoyment" of public accommodations. (This legislation was only sporadically enforced, however; not until the 1950s and 1960s would there be a widespread campaign to desegregate hotels, restaurants, theaters, and public transportation.) The Reconstruction Radicals also wanted to prosecute those whites accused of whipping black workers—a practice common during slavery, which after the war became a crime. The Radicals wanted the "freedmen" (ex-slaves) to help build a Southern Republican Party by running for political office. In the North, many Christians supported the Radical Republicans, seeing the campaign to reform race relations in the South as "an extension of the anti-slavery crusade."³⁰

During Reconstruction, Northern missionaries—including blacks as well as whites, women as well as men—poured into the South. They found a destitute region where "towns and cities lay in ruins, innumerable schools and churches had closed, and thousands of refugee families returned to find their farms, plantations, and communities in shambles."³¹ Churches that still held worship on Sunday had no money to pay teachers or buy supplies.

Illiteracy presented a great challenge to the Northern missionaries. Few of the four million newly freed black people could read, and neither could a great many poor to middling whites. Teaching people to read was a top priority, both to help prepare blacks for citizenship and to give them direct access to the Bible.

With so many children working the fields during the week, Sunday was the time for teaching people to read. Sunday schools spread quickly throughout the South during Reconstruction. Start-up costs were low, because teachers and lesson materials usually came from the North. Post-war Southern Sunday schools met in private homes, barns, or storefronts, or outdoors. These groups often gave rise

to new congregations. According to historian Sally McMullen, from whose work this information is drawn, the Sunday schools played a significant role in bringing literacy and hope to Southern communities.

As the Sunday schools spread throughout the South, blacks were forming their own churches, independent from white churches. We have already noted that racially mixed worship was common before the war. But afterward, great numbers of blacks left the white-controlled churches, to form congregations where they could worship as they pleased and follow their own leaders. Historian Eric Foner notes that this “wholesale withdrawal of blacks from biracial congregations redrew the

Box 4.13: Effect of Civil War on Catholics and Jews

Source: Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012), 172.

American patriotism, and with it the American sense of mission, had always possessed a defiantly Protestant soul, but the Civil War led to a more inclusive civil religion. When American Catholics and Jews fought in the war—which they did, on both sides, in large numbers—they shared a collective sacrifice for the greater good of the nation. The Union and Confederate governments also used Catholic emissaries to plead their cases in European capitals and the Vatican. War was thus a powerful way of Americanizing non-Protestants, especially immigrant groups, like Irish Catholics, who had not lived in the United States for very long. The process was not an easy one for Catholics, especially in the North, where the war effort was dominated by Protestant Yankees. Just as awkward for the overwhelmingly Democratic Irish Catholics were the Republicans’ efforts to use the war to further party interests, especially through support for big business, internal improvement, and New England shipping. Moreover, the transformation of war aims from union to emancipation troubled laboring Irish Catholics: not only did they share the traditional Democratic tolerance of slavery, they feared competition for unskilled labor from freed slaves. Still, despite the 1863 draft riots, sparked by Irish Catholic outrage at emancipation, conscription, and Protestant prejudice, and despite widespread anti-Catholicism, American Catholics successfully used the Civil War as a fulcrum for Americanization and as a starting point for full participation in the rites of American civil religion. Indeed by the 1880s the triumphal memory of the Civil War, rather than the more complicated reality, served as a powerful Americanizing force among American Catholics, including recent Catholic immigrants.

The same was true for Jews, albeit on a smaller scale because mass Jewish immigration was still decades away . . . but a threshold had been crossed. Through Civil War, civil religion was becoming more ecumenical.

religious map of the south" so that the independent black church became the most dramatic religious change after the war.

In the postwar South, the church was the institution led by blacks for blacks. The house of worship was also a school and a community center where blacks managed their own affairs and developed their own leaders. There was no artificial separation of religion and politics: African American preachers ran for public office during Reconstruction because they were respected leaders, often the most literate persons in their communities. The independent black church became the hub for community concerns, with religion, politics, education, and social progress intertwined. It has been said that the modern black community was born during Reconstruction.³²

And so was the Ku Klux Klan. Founded in Tennessee in 1866 by former Confederate

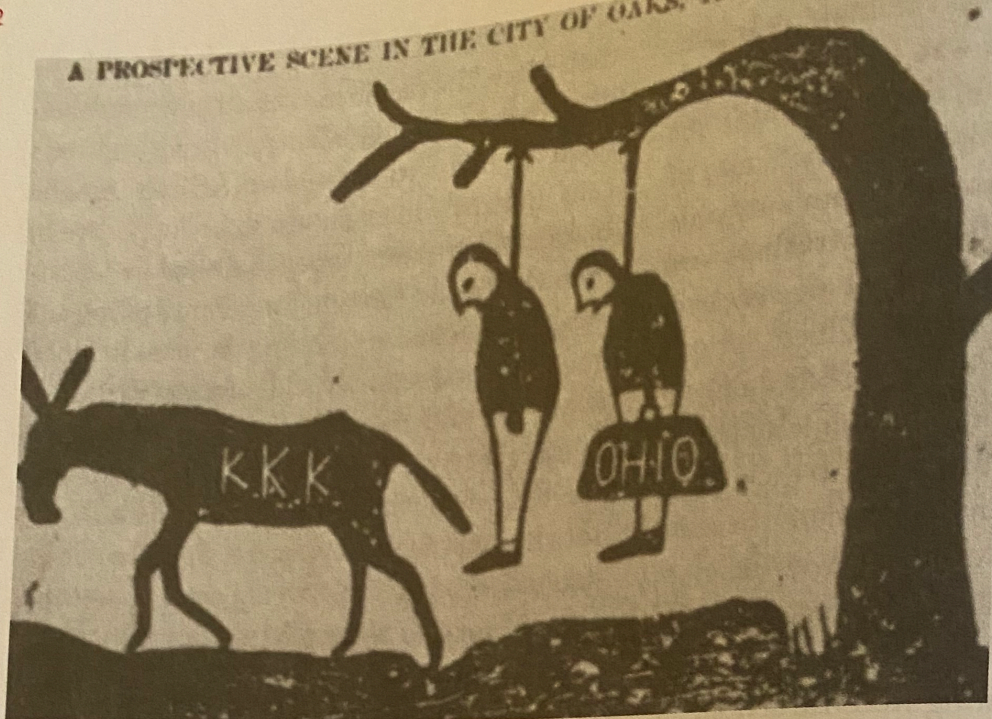
officers, the KKK arose "to keep Negroes in their place." Its members dressed in white robes, like ghosts of the Confederate dead, and rode forth at night to intimidate African Americans and any whites known to be supportive of blacks. With slavery now abolished and black men voting and running for political office, and Yankee Republicans running the state and local governments, *someone* had to defend the old ways—so said the KKK, who saw themselves as exercising vigilante justice. In truth, however, the KKK was what would now be called a terrorist group, fueled by rage at Southern defeat and by fears that blacks would move up from the bottom rung of society. Many Southerners did not approve of the Klan, and it was more powerful in some places than in others. But where it had a strong following, the Klan became "in effect . . . a military force serving the interests



Fig. 4.17 Northern women, many of them sent by churches, went to the South to help former slaves gain new skills. Sewing was one of the few trades open to women, but many female slaves knew only how to do fieldwork.

WOMEN AT THE FARMHOUSE—THE FARMER'S WIFE AND INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL, RICHMOND, VA.—FROM A SKETCH BY OUR SPECIAL ARTIST, JAS. R. TAYLOR.

BEST HONEY IN EUROPE.—The rapid increase in the production of best sugar is seen by the following: In 1872, the product in France was only 1,000,000 tons; in 1873, it had reached 1,500,000 tons; in 1874, it had reached 2,000,000 tons; in 1875, it had reached 2,500,000 tons; in 1876, it had reached 3,000,000 tons; in 1877, it had reached 3,500,000 tons; in 1878, it had reached 4,000,000 tons; in 1879, it had reached 4,500,000 tons; in 1880, it had reached 5,000,000 tons; in 1881, it had reached 5,500,000 tons; in 1882, it had reached 6,000,000 tons; in 1883, it had reached 6,500,000 tons; in 1884, it had reached 7,000,000 tons; in 1885, it had reached 7,500,000 tons; in 1886, it had reached 8,000,000 tons; in 1887, it had reached 8,500,000 tons; in 1888, it had reached 9,000,000 tons; in 1889, it had reached 9,500,000 tons; in 1890, it had reached 10,000,000 tons.



the *Independent Monitor* in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, threatens that carpetbaggers (i.e., Yankees who came south to help freed slaves or to attempt to profit from Southern defeat) faced the threat of lynching by the KKK. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

of the Democratic party, the planter class, and all those who desired the restoration of white supremacy.”³³

In its early phase, the Klan murdered hundreds of people; in some places, the Klan was so powerful that federal troops were brought in to crush it. Although Klansmen sometimes killed at random, more often they targeted blacks who ran for political office or who showed any sign of economic or social progress. Blacks were the primary targets, but whites who worked with or encouraged blacks also were harassed and sometimes killed. There was a religious dimension to the KKK, insofar as its members believed that God willed whites to rule society. Anyone who challenged white supremacy by daring to “advance the Negro” committed “the supreme Radical [Republican] sin,”³⁴ which the Klan, as

the self-appointed agent of divine wrath, stood ready to punish.

Reconstruction ended in 1877. It became a political bargaining chip for the election of the Republican candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes, to the presidency: in exchange for Southern electoral support, federal troops were withdrawn from Southern states. More broadly, however, Reconstruction was doomed both by Southern resistance and by waning Northern commitment. Southerners quickly dismantled Reconstruction and passed a whole new series of laws to enforce white superiority. The bright hopes of emancipation were all but extinguished, not to be fully rekindled until the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s—a movement that drew deeply from the black churches.

Box 4.14: The Black Church Opposed by KKK

Source: Documenting the American South, "The Church in the Southern Black Community," Charles Spencer Smith, *A History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, Vol. 2, 1856–1922 (Philadelphia: Book Concern of the AME Church, 1922).

Rev. Charles Spencer Smith (1852–1923) served for two years in the Alabama House of Representatives from 1874 through 1876. In 1900 he became a bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. In his history of the AME Church, Bishop Smith discussed the challenges faced by black churches in the South during Reconstruction.

Added to the many and various forms of opposition which they encountered was that of the Ku Klux Klan. The exact time when this bloody and murderous band was initiated is doubtful. Presumably it was in the year 1866. Its object was to terrorize the freedmen on the ground that it was necessary in order to maintain white supremacy. This purpose cannot justly be considered other than an excuse to conceal ulterior motives. At no time and in no section did the freedmen aspire to supremacy over the white people—not even after the adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment.

There are some basic factors anent Reconstruction days which have not yet appeared in print. Shortly after the close of the Civil War an organization was formed among the freedmen known as the Loyal League, an organization that was initiated by Northern white men, many of whom were ex-federal officers. The objects of the League were fraternal and cooperative. It aspired to bring all the loyal elements in the South into harmonious relationship, with a view of making secure the fruits of the Civil War. The only symbol of secrecy was a grip [handshake]. The usual meeting place was a church or a school house. The only oath administered was that of loyalty and obedience to the government of the United States. There was not even the dream of making reprisals on the Confederates. To the marvel of the civilized world, neither during the Civil War nor after, did the slaves or ex-slaves exhibit a spirit of rancor, hatred, or revenge toward their masters or former masters. By a general uprising of the slaves during the absence of the Confederates, followed by a massacre of their wives and children, the Civil War would have been ended much sooner than it was. A general refusal to continue to work on the part of the slaves would have had a similar effect by cutting off the supply of food from the Confederates. There is no more striking picture in human history—and it challenges supreme admiration—than that of the patient, forgiving, forbearing, toiling slaves, guarding the hearthstones and tilling the fields of their masters who, amid the stress and storm of war, were striving to rivet more firmly the shackles of their oppression. Have their virtues of forgiveness and forbearance been justly rewarded? If the answer is to be found in the curtailment of privileges, the restriction of rights; in their being made the victims of mobs and having their bodies dismembered and burned, or strangled at the end of a rope; it is, yes. Otherwise, no.

It is not altogether improbable that the organization of the Ku Klux Klan was suggested as an offset to the Loyal League. If so, the apprehension which doubtless inspired it was wholly unfounded. Admitting for argument's sake that the ground of its organization was well-founded, and for the purpose generally stated, namely, the maintenance of white supremacy, was it necessary, in order to accomplish this, to take advantage of the cover of night to assassinate preachers and teachers, burn churches and school houses, and wantonly murder civilians engaged in other pursuits? However, not all the Ku-Kluxing was done on one side. In many instances, where the trail of the Ku Klux became known, it was ambushed by colored men, and the horses of numberless Ku Klux went home without their riders. . . . However, it is still true that whatever a people soweth that shall they reap. Furthermore, it is the inexorable logic of sequence that violence begets violence.