

# MODERATION OF A YOUNG WHIG: ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND THE TEMPERANCE ADDRESS

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## INTRODUCTION

In the many years since his untimely death, Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth President of the United States of America, has become the nation's most revered statesman. His likeness adorns the banks of the Potomac and the Black Hills of the Dakotas. As a martyr who was taken before the American people could fully appreciate who he was, Lincoln has come to be defined as an American enigma. Many men spend their lives in the noble pursuit of putting aside the martyrdom, the face sculpted from marble, and the messianic status which was thrust upon him in the hope that they can fully understand Lincoln the man, not Lincoln the myth. To this end, every aspect of his life from his early upbringing west of the Appalachian Mountains to his days in the Executive Mansion have been scrutinized and examined. In fact, there are an estimated 17,000 books written on the sixteenth President of the United States. In terms of scale alone, he is only third behind Jesus Christ and William Shakespeare as the most studied person in the history of the world. Scholars have poured over his

private letters and public addresses alike to fully understand his political philosophy in a greater attempt to understand the inner workings of Lincoln's mind. However, out of those thousands of books exploring the life and politics of the Great Emancipator, not one of them is strictly dedicated to his 1842 Address to the Washingtonian Society, or what is more commonly known today as the Temperance Address.

It is remarkable if the Temperance Address, which Lincoln delivered when he was still little more than a prairie lawyer and state representative, is even mentioned in any notable Lincoln biography. Oft-praised biographies by Lord Charnwood, Richard Brookheiser, Allen Guelzo, and James M. McPherson do not reference the speech in any manner.<sup>1</sup> David Herbert Donald's Pulitzer Prize winning biography only speaks on Temperance for two paragraphs.<sup>2</sup> When most biographies come to Lincoln's early days as a prairie lawyer and a young Whig politician, there is a noticeable lapse of deep thinking on the part of historians and political scientists alike. In the pursuit of understanding Lincoln at his political pinnacle, the majority of Lin-

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<sup>1</sup> While bereft of the Temperance Address, the specific one-volume Lincoln biographies mentioned, Mr. Charnwood's *Abraham Lincoln* (1917), Mr. Brookheiser's *Founders' Son: A Life of Abraham Lincoln* (2014), Mr. Guelzo's *Redeemer President* (1999), and Mr.

McPherson's *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography* (2009), are all highly recommended by the author for their prose and their understanding of Lincoln's mind.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Donald's notable work, simply titled *Lincoln* (1995), speaks on the Temperance Address as a way to strengthen a previous claim he made; that Lincoln's "reservations about abolitionism extended to other humanitarian reform movements" and his fears of uncontrolled emotions. (p. 82)

coln scholars pass over essential writings which, if taken into consideration, would result in a complete understanding of his political philosophy.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, some scholars argue that Lincoln's youth is reason enough to discredit the Temperance Address as an unnecessary component of Lincolnian scholarship. Lincoln had only recently turned thirty-three years old when he delivered his remarks, a mere ten days after his birthday. Fred Kaplan in his book *Lincoln: The Biography of a Writer* argued that the young Whig presented "an idealistic view" regarding the degree to which people are accessible to rational persuasion.<sup>4</sup> This idealistic writing would seem to suggest a novice young man who did not have the knowledge or experience to truly speak on the subject. Although Lincoln, at the age of thirty-three, was considered young at the time he delivered the speech, the Temperance Address reveals a man well versed in the art of rhetoric. America's history proves that some of its greatest men blossom at a relatively early age. Thomas Jefferson was also thirty-three years old when he drafted the Declaration of Independence, the cornerstone of American democracy.

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that not all scholars disregard Temperance as a second-rate speech. The most famous Lincolnian scholar that academia has produced, Harry V. Jaffa, spent a respectable deal of time on the speech in his 1959 work *Crisis of the House Divided*. The thesis of the work, which chronicled the maturity of Mr. Lincoln's political philosophy in the years leading up to the American Civil War, was that the Lincoln-Douglas Debates were the home-spun, democratic equivalent to Plato's *The Republic*.

In *Crisis*, Jaffa utilized Temperance as a resource to argue that Mr. Lincoln, who believed that objective truths (i.e., all men are created equal) were the key to obtaining justice, was the American Socrates. This was pitted directly against the relativist ideology of Mr. Douglas, who believed, in regards to the

Critics are right to point out that the passionate, sometimes theatrical tone Lincoln spoke in contrasts vastly from the somber rhetoric he used in his later speeches. However, this rhetorical strategy was exactly what Lincoln intended to convey, further showing the necessity of studying the Temperance Address as a serious piece of Lincolnian scholarship. While it is the most extravagant language that Lincoln permitted himself to indulge in, it is also the most rational inquiry of human passions and most persuasive plea for moderation that he ever made. Lincoln's ability to show tact and a deep understanding of political principles in the Temperance Address clearly shows that there is more to the address than the inflamed rhetoric that dominates the conversation. For many years, it has been thought of as too confusing and too theatrical to truly understand fully. In fact, even modern Lincoln scholars such as Lucas Morel, who has arguably written more on the Temperance Address than any other person, claimed it to be Lincoln's "most puzzling speech."<sup>5</sup>

The language he used can cloud his true intent, but that is all the more reason to invest time and energy into the study of the

doctrine of popular sovereignty, that justice is what the majority of voters dictated; the democratic equivalent of Thrasymachus, who believed justice is the advantage of the stronger. The Temperance Address was not the primary speech that Jaffa analyzed in the book, but one of many. Regardless of how much time Jaffa spent on the speech, it was not the primary focus of *Crisis* and, therefore, there is still no single volume that examines Temperance to the fullest extent.

<sup>4</sup> Kaplan, Fred. *Lincoln: The Biography of a Writer*. New York: Harper Collins Publishing, p. 117.

<sup>5</sup> Morel, Lucas E. "Lincoln among the Reformers: Tempering the Temperance Movement." *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*. Vol 20, Issue 1. Winter 1999, pp.1.

Temperance Address. Harry V. Jaffa, who wrote about Temperance in his philosophical magnum opus, *Crisis of the House Divided*, argued this very point. “In short, Lincoln’s Temperance Address, on the surface a merely conventional oration, strongly praising virtue and condemning vice, is a well-appointed ship for navigating some of the strongest voting tides of mid-century America.”<sup>6</sup>

In the pantheon of Lincolnian scholarship, you will find the usual suspects: The Lyceum Address, “A House Divided,” Cooper Union, the Gettysburg Address, and the Second Inaugural to name a few. Each of these speeches emphasizes a specific point in the larger and broader field of Abraham Lincoln’s political philosophy. But very few scholars argue that the Temperance Address belong alongside those masterpieces. It is the intent of this statesmanship thesis to do exactly what few have attempted to do: advocate for the Temperance Address as an essential piece of Lincolnian scholarship and elevate it to the pantheon of great speeches made by Lincoln.

As with any speech worthy of scholarly examination, it is important to understand the historical and political context in which the Temperance Address took place. Chapter one does exactly that. It lays the foundations for the rest of the thesis by offering a summary of the Temperance Address and emphasizing the three main arguments that Lincoln presented in the speech. The first of these three main points, and the one that Lincoln spent the most time on, is a reflection on the failures of what he calls the old Temperance movement in comparison with the present successes of the current movement. The second point is the call for nondrinkers to sign the Temperance pledge, swearing they will not participate in the production, selling, or consumption of alco-

hol. The third and final point is the optimistic vision that Lincoln held of the political and moral freedom that will come to the people who are best able to control their passions. This should help give context to the political and moral problems of the time in which Lincoln was speaking.

The summarization of the Temperance Address in chapter one serves as the windup to the heart of the thesis, found in the next three chapters, which provides the three core arguments as to why Temperance is an essential piece of Lincolnian scholarship. Each chapter will emphasize and speak on a different argument, with the hope that the reader will come away from this scholarly study compelled to read, study, and appreciate the Temperance Address.

The first argument, highlighted in chapter two, is that the Temperance Address continues Lincoln’s dialogue on the necessity for *political* moderation that he started in his far more notable 1838 Lyceum Address. Lyceum and Temperance act as two halves of one very important conversation. The Lyceum Address was given in response to an unprecedented surge in violent activity across the country by the abolitionist movement. Lincoln understood that violent acts threatened the safety of the country. In response to the era of mob rule, Lincoln proposed a solution that would strengthen America’s political institutions and allow civil liberty to flourish. Lincoln declared that every American should make a sacred pledge to never violate, in the last particular, the law of the land. This sacred pledge should become “the *political religion* of the nation,” he says.<sup>7</sup> As a mean to the end of restoring the rule of law, Lincoln called on the American people to observe the Constitution and laws with an almost religious zeal. This political religion is the moderation of man’s political passions;

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<sup>6</sup> Jaffa, Harry V. *Crisis of the House Divided: An Interpretation of the Issues in the Lincoln-*

*Douglas Debates*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p. 246.

<sup>7</sup> Basler, p. 80-81. Lincoln’s emphasis.

to hold themselves back from executing their own understanding of justice upon those who they deem to be unjust. This is the bond that holds Lyceum and Temperance in such close relations and, therefore, emboldens the defense of the importance of Temperance.

The second argument, which will be the topic of investigation in chapter three, is that the Temperance Address presents an argument for the importance of *moral* moderation, but also illustrates Lincoln's understanding of human nature. As the previous chapter spoke on the dangers of political tyranny, exhibited through mob rule, this chapter will explore the concept of, and remedy to, moral tyranny. The moral tyrant, which reigned over the innocent souls who lacked the strength to combat it. Understanding that intemperance, taking the form of alcoholism, is a dangerous form of moral tyranny, Lincoln used the Temperance Address to submit to the public his remedy to the problem. Before addressing the problems of moral tyranny which the American people faced and Lincoln's remedy to the conflict, it is important to speak in detail about his understanding of human nature. Lincoln's concept of human nature served as the first ingredient to the remedy for moral tyranny. In doing so, Lincoln advocated a moderate life that neither completely indulges in the passions of the body nor completely abstains from them.

The third argument to vindicate the necessity of the Temperance Address, highlighted in chapter four, is by far the most comprehensive and the grandest of the three presented in this statesmanship thesis. It takes into consideration Lincoln's arguments for both political and moral moderation and analyzes them as one, singular virtue, as embodied in the life of George Washington. Lincoln argued in Temperance that both political and moral moderation are essential to self-government and for the salvation of the American experiment. The institution of slavery, which is the embodiment of tyranny,

and the moral conundrum of drunkenness, which represents enslavement, dirtied the vibrant republican robe draped over the nation. If these political and moral problems were the instruments which brought about the national sin, then it was Lincoln's intent in the Temperance Address to bring about the nation's salvation. To this point, Lincoln appealed to the characteristic moderation of Washington at the end of the Temperance Address. Lincoln's rational plea to the American people to moderate themselves underlines the importance of America's responsibility to inspire the people of the world to rise from tyranny and acquire the political and moral freedom which America birthed and nurtured to maturity.

This scholarly study is an examination of Lincoln's principles and his reasoning supporting them. For too long this speech has been neglected as others have been pushed to center stage. Now is the time for the Temperance Address to enjoy its moment in the sun. Even his greatest of speeches see renewed debate and interpretations, long after Lincoln's famous somber rhetoric concluded – as if there is something still to be found in his words that is hidden from view. Countless books have been written on the speeches that defined his Presidency and reflected his statesmanship, yet the Temperance Address is strangely left out of the spotlight. This in and of itself is a travesty in Lincolnian scholarship that we hope to correct.

## CHAPTER ONE Lincoln Among the Reformers<sup>8</sup>

**“Dear Speed:  
You will see by the last Sangamo Journal  
that I made a Temperance speech on the  
22-of Feb. which I claim Fanny and you  
shall read as an act of charity to me; for I  
cannot learn that anybody else has read  
it, or is likely to.”**

– *Abraham Lincoln, Letter to Joshua Speed*<sup>9</sup>

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As with any speech worth scholarly examination, it is important to understand the historical and political context in which the Temperance Address was first presented to the public. Abraham Lincoln, more than most politicians, followed in the footsteps of the previous generations of statesmen and philosophers. It is therefore necessary to examine, however briefly, the state of the body politic and the American mind. Originating in the early nineteenth century as an offshoot of radical Protestantism, the temperance movement was known to have both anti-Catholic and xenophobic tendencies. Believing that alcohol was a moral evil, these movements lobbied for the abolition of alcohol as they believed it to be the reason for the degradation of man’s soul.

Founded in 1840 by reformed drunkards, the Washingtonian Society attempted to differentiate themselves from their brethren in various ways. While most temperance groups were devoutly Protestant and showed no remorse while evangelizing, the Washingtonians were noticeably secular in their

motives. Many members of the organization “did not pray to [any] deity for salvation, but were instead dependent on each other’s moral support for a cure.”<sup>10</sup> This reliance on secularism made the Society an appealing alternative to those who were disheartened with the fanaticism which was exhibited in the more radical sects of the temperance movement. It was this ideological distinction that persuaded William Herndon, Lincoln’s law partner, to organize a Springfield lodge in December of 1841. By the time Lincoln gave his speech following February, nearly every city, town, and hamlet in Illinois had some form of temperance lodge.

Herndon, who was president of the Springfield lodge, asked Lincoln to speak to the Washingtonian Society on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February, which was also the birthday of George Washington. Washington’s birthday was welcomed yearly with great fanfare and spectacle. There would be a parade in every downtown, lecturers would speak to sold-out audiences, and the masses would crowd the streets waving banners and singing in homage to the first President. It was in this atmosphere that Lincoln attempted to remind the Washingtonian Society of their heritage and their namesake with the hope that the society’s members would be compelled to moderate themselves both politically and morally.

However, when his lecture was completed, Lincoln was greeted with a timid reception. The great majority of the people who attended were underwhelmed by the remarks. Herndon, who later wrote one of the first notable biographies of Lincoln, claimed that the people who left the Washingtonian

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<sup>8</sup> To give credit where credit is due, the title of this chapter is inspired by an excellent piece on the Temperance Address by Dr. Lucas Morel of Washington and Lee University entitled “**Lincoln among the Reformers: Tempering the Temperance Movement.**”

<sup>9</sup> Basler, Roy P, editor. *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*. Cleveland: Di Capo Press, p. 145.

<sup>10</sup> Blumenthal, Sidney. *The Political Life of Abraham Lincoln - A Self Made Man: 1809-1849*, New York: Simon & Shuster Publishing, p. 231.

Society's event that day were severely disappointed and even offended by some of Lincoln's remarks. "It's a shame,' I heard one man say, 'that he should be permitted to abuse us so in the house of the Lord.'" <sup>11</sup> For Lincoln, the speech was a disaster that did not touch the audience in the way he had hoped. In a letter addressed to his friend, Joshua Speed, Lincoln implored his friend to read the Temperance Address as an act of charity because Lincoln "cannot learn that anybody else has read it, or is likely to." In this private dialogue between two close friends Lincoln said he wants people to read the speech, even though no one in the audience took it seriously. Should the speech truly have been an embarrassment, there would be no call for anyone to read it. But Lincoln implored Speed to read it as an act of charity. Lincoln believed that there is something in the address that needs to be said. This alone should be tantalizing enough to warrant this scholarly examination in to why the Temperance Address is essential to understand Lincoln's political philosophy.

Recognizing that many seemed to come away from the speech offended at what Lincoln said, and because the intent of this statesmanship thesis is to advocate for the installation of this speech into the pantheon of Lincolnian scholarship, it is important to first analyze the Temperance Address to understand the rhetorical structure and the main points. The rhetorical structure of the Temperance Address can be divided into three main points and can be further divided from there. <sup>12</sup>

### *Reformers Past and Present*

Lincoln began his remarks praising the current temperance movement for the work they have been able to accomplish. "Although the Temperance movement cause has been in progress for near twenty years, it is apparent to all, that it is, *just now*, being crowned with a degree of success, hitherto unparalleled."<sup>13</sup> In the years leading up to 1842, the number of members to any one of the many temperance societies across the country swelled dramatically, allowing the cause of temperance to transform abruptly from "a cold abstract theory, to a living, breathing, active, and powerful chieftain."<sup>14</sup> Before this great swell of activity, the old champions of the temperance movement, as Lincoln called them, were unable to persuade the morally enslaved masses to put down the bottle and take up the moral cause of temperance. Pastors, lawyers, and hired agents were the antiquated champions of the movement who lacked approachability and were leading the charge for all the wrong reasons. Lincoln calls the preachers fanatics; the lawyers were vain; and the hired agent did the noble work for salary only.

On top of their ulterior motives, these old champions failed because they were not able to truly persuade their fellow man that their cause was just. "But had the old-school champions themselves, been most wise selecting, was their system of tactics, the most judicious? It seems to me, it was not. Too much denunciation against dram sellers and dram drinkers was indulged in. This, I think, was both impolitic and unjust."<sup>15</sup> Lincoln further divided his argument into two

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<sup>11</sup> Herndon, William. *Herndon's Life of Lincoln: The History and Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln*. New York: Plenum Publishing Corp. – Da Capo Press, Inc. p. 206.

<sup>12</sup> In *Crisis of the House Divided*, Harry V. Jaffa presented the reader an in-depth structural summary of the Temperance Address which

was extremely helpful in my initial investigation of the speech. It is so helpful that I have included it at the back of this thesis in **Appendix A**.

<sup>13</sup> Basler, p. 131.

<sup>14</sup> Basler, p. 131.

<sup>15</sup> Basler, p. 133.

different subsections: the unjust implications of the old movement and the impolitic motives employed by the same parties. Lincoln criticized the movement for addressing the drunkards not with persuasion or compassion, but tones of denunciation and harassment. This method did little good and much bad.

When the dram-seller and drinker, were incessantly told, ... that *they* were the authors of all the vice and misery and crime in the land; that *they* were the manufacturers and material of all the thieves and robbers and murders that infested the earth; that their houses were the workshops of the devil; and that *their persons* should be shunned by all the good and virtuous, as moral pestilences – I say, when they were told all this, and in this way, it is not wonderful that they were slow, *very slow*, to acknowledge the truth...<sup>16</sup>

Those very people which the old-school movement attempted to persuade became ostracized and stubborn. Cries of condemnation and ridicule were used in place of humanity and compassion. With this hateful rhetoric, it is not surprising for Lincoln that the dram-drinkers and sellers took so long to join the ranks of the denouncers. For it is not in the nature of man, Lincoln said, to be submitted to anything that he perceives to be against his own interests.

After laying out in rather plain terms the failures of the old-school champions of the Temperance movement, Lincoln critiqued why their methods were not successful. “To expect [the dram-sellers and drinkers] to do otherwise than as they did ... was to expect a reversal of human nature, which is

God’s decree, and can never be reversed.”<sup>17</sup> For Lincoln, the antiquated advocates for temperance had a misconstrued understanding of human nature and was the reason why their endeavors did not succeed. Lincoln said that the conduct of man was designed to be influenced by persuasion and not by the thunderous tones of denunciation used by previous generations of the movement. He argued that the age-old maximum “a drop of honey catches more flies than a gallon of gull” applies to men in equal measure as it does the fly. Lincoln argued that persuasion is the best way to tender the mind of man and open the drunkard up to different ideas, including the naked truth itself. If the Temperance movement would continue to use the antiquated means of conversion, not even “Herculean force and precision” would be able to penetrate the thick armor the dram-sellers and drinkers have put on.

What gives the new generation of Temperance advocates such widespread success is their desire to convince the drunkard that they are friends, suggesting a greater sense of equality in the new movement that made it more desirable. “Love through all their actions runs, and all their words and mild. In this spirit [the new Temperance movement] peak and act, and in the same, they are heard and regarded.”<sup>18</sup> The unjust tactics of the old champions stem from their belief that man’s nature is capable of being remade into the pinnacle of human perfection. What makes the acts of the new generation so successful, according to Lincoln, is that the reformers are able to take into account the imperfection of man and cultivate change through the use of one’s ability to reason.

Moving on to that critique of the denunciations against the dram-sellers and drinkers as impolitic, Lincoln noted that a

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<sup>16</sup> Basler, p. 133. Lincoln’s emphasis.

<sup>17</sup> Basler, p. 133.

<sup>18</sup> Basler, p. 134.

simple journey into the long history of the world shows us that alcohol has always been a part of life. “It commonly entered into the first draught of the infant, and the last draught of the dying man.”<sup>19</sup> After surveying the broader history of mankind it becomes clear over that although alcohol can easily be abused, it is not fundamentally evil.

It is true, that even *then*, it was known and acknowledged, that many were greatly injured by it; but none seemed to think the injury arose from the *use* of a *bad thing*, but from the *abuse* of a *very good thing*. – The victims to it were pitied, and compassioned, just as now are, the heirs of consumption, and other hereditary diseases.<sup>20</sup>

Lincoln noted that in the past, alcoholism was treated as a misfortune that should be alleviated, not as a crime that should be punished. With this in mind, Lincoln again chastised the old champions for arguing that all drunkards were utterly incorrigible, and therefore must be turned adrift to fend for themselves. With the hope that only the temperate can carry on this vision of moral superiority, the old-school reformers believed that after many years all of man would be inherently temperate because of their Darwinian. Using uncharacteristically aggressive language, Lincoln called the motive “fiendishly selfish, so like throwing fathers and brothers overboard, to lighten the boat for our security – that the noble minded shrank from the manifest meanness of the thing.”<sup>21</sup>

### *The Arguments of Condescension and Appetite*

Speaking directly to the new champions of the Temperance movement, Lincoln began to transition to speak on the second point of the speech. Turning to the work that still needs to be done, Lincoln argued that even the Temperate should sign the temperance pledge, which was signed by all former drunkards. These types of pledges were not uncommon in the decade preceding the Temperance Address, and were often looked at as official documents. Documents such as these were seen as public methods to hold the drunkard accountable for his actions as he began the undoubtedly difficult process of emancipating himself from the tyranny of alcohol. Lincoln believed that having the nondrinker sign their own pledge would help lift the morale of the drunkards who are making a very public declaration. Lincoln argued that when the drunkard should cast his eyes around him, “he should be able to see, all that he respects, all that he admires, and all that [he?] loves, kindly and anxiously pointing him onward; and none beckoning him back, to his former miserable ‘wallowing in the mire.’”<sup>22</sup>

Lincoln knew quite well that the great majority of the men and women in the audience would be nondrinkers who would scoff at the prospect of signing their own pledge. To further press the audience to “make it as unfashionable to withhold our names from the temperance pledge as for husbands to wear wives’ bonnets to church,” Lincoln put forward two arguments.<sup>23</sup> These two arguments can be categorized as the arguments of *condescension* and *appetite*. In the argument of condescension, Lincoln argued that because “Omnipotence condescended to take on himself the form of sinful

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<sup>19</sup> Basler, p. 135.

<sup>20</sup> Basler, p. 135. Lincoln’s emphasis.

<sup>21</sup> Basler, p. 136.

<sup>22</sup> Basler, p. 138.

<sup>23</sup> Basler, p. 138.

man” to make them pure, so should the citizens of Springfield be willing to sign a paper that brings them to the level of the drunkard.<sup>24</sup> This was Lincoln’s tactful way of pressing upon them how important it is for the drinker to know that he has the whole of the community behind him. The condescension argument is not the strongest one possible; but nonetheless, it was Lincoln’s attempt to appeal to the audiences’ religion to bring about a greater sense of social equality between the drinker and the temperate. Although the Washingtonian Society was known across the country as a secular organization, the majority of the audience were religious zealots. Appealing to the audiences’ faith was an act of tact on Lincoln’s part. To sign the pledge would bring the temperate closer to the level of the drunk with the hope it would ignite the drive for the drunkard to rise the rest of the way, and join society as equals.

The argument of appetite, on the other hand, does not call on the audiences’ religiousness, but calls to mind their own morality. “In my judgement, such as us have never fallen victims, have been spared more from the absence of appetite, than from any mental or moral superiority over those who have.”<sup>25</sup> Those who abstained from drinking did so not because they hold moral high ground to the drunkard, but because they simply did not have the all-consuming temptation. This implication greatly offended the audience because they did believe they were morally superior to the drunkard. Lincoln pointed out that the majority of people are able to conjure to mind brilliant men and women who have fallen into the clutches of alcohol. Alcoholism is the “Egyptian angel of death, commissioned to slay if not the first, the fairest born of every family” that keeps “our fathers, our brothers, our sons, and our sons prostrate

in the chains of moral death.”<sup>26</sup> In order to combat the threat in each person, every man should give aide to the downtrodden and no one should be excused from it. It is here where Lincoln began to use uncharacteristically theatrical rhetoric, as if to further spur the desires of the public to carry on the great work ahead. “To all the living everywhere, we cry ‘come sound the moral resurrection trump, that these may rise and stand up, an exceeding great army’ – ‘Come from the four winds, O breath! and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.’”<sup>27</sup>

### *The Political and Moral Freedom of Mankind*

Using the theatrical rhetoric as the catalyst for the transition to the third and final point in the Temperance Address, Lincoln concluded his speech through a reflection on the past, commentary on the present, and an optimistic vision of the future where the American people are able to direct their passions into healthy channels.

Reflecting on the past, Lincoln praised the American Revolution as “the political revolution of ‘76” which “has given us a degree political freedom, far exceeding that of any other of the nations of the earth.”<sup>28</sup> What came with this radical revolution in both theory and in practice was the declaration that all men are created equal and the prudence to find “a solution [to the] long mooted problem, as to the capability of man to govern himself.”<sup>29</sup> In the long history of the world there have been only failed democratic city states and monarchical regimes, whether tyrannical or otherwise. The hand of Divine Providence seemingly appointed a small ragtag collection of farmers, merchants, and lawyers to prove that

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<sup>24</sup> Basler, p. 139.

<sup>25</sup> Basler, p. 139.

<sup>26</sup> Basler, p. 139.

<sup>27</sup> Basler, p. 139.

<sup>28</sup> Basler, p. 139 – 140.

<sup>29</sup> Basler, p. 140.

men are capable of ruling themselves better than any single figurehead. While it may be easy to get distracted by Lincoln's understanding of American exceptionalism, we will save our discussion on this particular text for the following chapters to elaborate upon.

Turning to what Lincoln called the temperance revolution, he finds a "stronger bondage broken; a viler slavery manumitted; a greater tyrant deposed."<sup>30</sup> When alcoholism no longer claims the lives of fathers and mothers, sons and daughters alike, it will then become a noble ally to the cause of political freedom. Lincoln asserted that the evils of uninhibited passions that consume the lives of many can be combated against with reason. In an argument, appeals to emotion will never result in true change. Only when one person is able to appeal to another person and enucleate a desire to think, understand, and form judgements through unimpassioned logic can a man be truly free from his designated tyrant. Reason will be the catalyst for a time "when all appetites controlled, all passions subdued, all matters subjected."<sup>31</sup> It is here that Lincoln looked optimistically towards a future "when there shall be neither a slave nor a drunkard on the earth," and the political and moral freedom of mankind is planted and nurtured.

And when that victory shall be complete – when there shall be neither a slave nor a drunkard, how proud the title of that *Land*, which may truly claim to be the birthplace and the cradle of both these revolutions, that shall have ended in victory. How nobly distinguished that People, who shall have **planted** and **nurtured** to maturity, both the political and moral freedom of their species.<sup>32</sup>

In the long history of the world, Lincoln believed that American civilization, which was **conceived** in liberty and **dedicated** to the equality of all men in the political revolution of 1776, is the only *conceivable* place where neither a slave nor a drunkard shall live. Human nature prevents the absolute good from being achieved, and, therefore, makes the utopian vision which Lincoln spoke of a noble end to pursue if it is recognized that the complete emancipation of both the slave and the drunkard is not achievable. Because the American people find it necessary to moderate their political and moral sentiments through reason and choice, it is the only place that can truly lead to the political and moral freedom of mankind. While this point is essential to the Temperance Address, it also plays a role in defending the importance of the speech and will be addressed in greater detail within the coming chapters.

In the conclusion to the speech, Lincoln charts the course forward for the nation where the passions of man are moderated by channeling the character of George Washington. Washington was deified by many Americans at this time because he, according to Lincoln, was "the mightiest name of earth – *long since* the mightiest in the cause of civil liberty; *still* mightiest in moral reformation."<sup>33</sup> This can be deduced by a simple journey into the short history of the Republic. It was very tempting for the young nation to revert back to a monarchical form of government with Washington installed as King. Washington, however, refused to entertain any such thought and willingly relinquished his military and presidential powers on two occasions. The first occasion was in the aftermath of the Revolutionary War, when General Washington relinquished his commission as the general of the Continental Army. The second occasion

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<sup>30</sup> Basler, p. 140.

<sup>31</sup> Basler, p. 140.

<sup>32</sup> Basler, p. 140-141. Lincoln and Author's emphasis.

<sup>33</sup> Basler, p. 141. Lincoln's emphasis.

came at the end of Washington's second term as President when he decided not to run for a third term, and instead retired to Mount Vernon. These noble and moderate actions earned Washington well-deserved praise and he was hailed as the American Cincinnatus.

The decision to name the Washingtonian Society after the first President was the organization's way of associating their pursuit of moral reformation with the late President's moderation. Washington, more than any of the other Founders, was revered for his characteristic moderation and was an inspirational figure for those who wished to temper their own passions. To this end, Lincoln acknowledged the namesake of the Washingtonian Society to encourage people to emulate George Washington in matters both political and moral. Instead of calling to mind a messianic figure to aspire to, Lincoln drew from the secular ideology of the Washingtonian Society and holds Washington up as the true embodiment of moderation.

With this passionate call to leave the jubilant celebrations of the day and strive earnestly towards political and moral moderation, Lincoln concluded his remarks. Questions such as man's ability to govern himself and to moderate his passions have perplexed the wisest heads of Athens, Jerusalem, and Rome. Lincoln's speech on this occasion illustrated his worthiness to be a pupil of the greatest of the political and philosophical masters who proceeded him in time and in thought. One can hardly imagine a better calculated time and place to raise questions of moderation in an atmosphere that encouraged both moral promiscuity and

political aggression. In the following chapters, we will further investigate the three arguments that support the claim that the Temperance Address should be considered as an essential piece of Lincolnian scholarship.

## CHAPTER TWO: The Temple of Liberty

**“It has been frequently remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide, the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force.”**

– *Publius, The Federalist No. 1*<sup>34</sup>

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In the established pantheon of Lincolnian scholarship, there are few speeches that have been examined more thoroughly than Lincoln's 1838 lecture to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois entitled *The Perpetuation of our Political Institutions*. The speech was among the earliest of Lincoln's to be published and circulated and has, as a result, been thoroughly examined by historians and political scientists alike.

Through the years, the Lyceum Address has been able to do what the Temperance Address never could: stay relevant. It is standard for historians and political scientists alike to use Temperance as a lens in which to view and analyze Lyceum.<sup>35</sup> This

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<sup>34</sup> Carey, George W., and James McClellan, editors. *The Federalist: The Gideon Edition*. Indianapolis, Liberty Fund, Inc., p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Many scholars analyze the Lyceum Address with the belief that it serves as a northern star of sorts in the journey to understand Lincoln's mind. “In 1838, when he was only twenty-

nine, he delivered an “Address on the Perpetuation of our Political Institutions,” [the Lyceum Address] in which he called for a “political religion.” This speech, and a companion statement made five years later [the Temperance Address of 1842] reveals more about Lincoln's thinking on civil

has led to the exaltation of the Lyceum Address and the degradation of Temperance, as many scholars now see Temperance as a second-rate speech at best. However, the intent of this chapter is to do the opposite: view the Temperance Address through the lens of the Lyceum Address. Historically, this is justified as the Lyceum Address was delivered and printed for the masses nearly four years before Lincoln even spoke to the Washingtonian Society. The timeline of history builds off the shoulders of the past, and not the other way around. To have the most accurate understanding of what Lincoln advocates in regards to the necessity of political moderation it is necessary to view the Temperance Address through the lens of Lyceum.

The catalyst for Lincoln's remarks to the Young Men's Lyceum was the rise of violent acts agitated by mob rule in response to the issue of slavery. By the mid nineteenth century, the institution of slavery had become a staple of the antebellum way of life and was not going anywhere anytime soon. Seeing how slavery became engrained in the minds of the American people, abolitionists across the country, including William Lloyd Garrison, lifted their voices in protest and in anger. Believing the Constitution was an evil document that supported and even encouraged slavery, Garrison advocated that the Northern States who opposed slavery should withdraw from their covenant with the other states of the Union. All enslaved peoples should be freed immediately, and if not, Garrison would do everything in his power to ensure that the slaves were freed.

In response to the normalcy of slavery, Garrison established the American

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religion than the later speeches in which he actually preached it, because in the earlier speeches he focused far more explicitly on the reasons for, and the nature of, civil religion." (Zuckert, "Lincoln and the Problem of Civil Religion," *Law and Philosophy: The Practice*

Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) in 1833 which immediately began establishing branch societies and helping to fund newspapers to publish abolitionist speeches and sermons, accounts of slavery, and news of anti-slavery events. Quickly, the AASS took root in many of the northern states and spread like wildfire across the northern states and territories. Over the next five years, nearly two thousand local chapters that housed a quarter of a million members were opened across the country. While they were quite successful in the north, abolitionists were greeted with contempt and threats when they ventured south of the Mason-Dixon. Yet the evangelical nature of the AASS did not waiver and the abolitionists continued to push farther into the antebellum south. Over a period of four months from July to October of 1835, in both the North and the South, there were "thirty-five riots against abolitionists, eleven mobs against supposed slave insurrections, and eleven riots against blacks."<sup>36</sup> At this specific moment in American history, mob rule became commonplace. Lynching, hangings, and destruction of private property becoming regular news from St. Louis all the way down the Mississippi.

One of the most heinous examples of this sense of lawlessness that spread through America was the lynching of Francis McIntosh in St. Louis in 1836. McIntosh was "seized in the street, dragged to the suburbs of the city, chained to a tree, and actually burned to death; and all within a single hour from the time he had been a freeman, attending to his own business, and at peace with the world."<sup>37</sup> This event set off a horrific series of incidents across the Midwest, including the murder of abolitionist newspaper editor

*of Theory Vol.2.* Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992, p. 721)

<sup>36</sup> Blumenthal, Sidney. *The Political Life of Abraham Lincoln - A Self Made Man: 1809-1849*, New York: Simon & Shuster Publishing, p. 134

<sup>37</sup> Basler, p. 78

Elijah Lovejoy, which became the ground-work for Lincoln's lecture that he gave to the Young Men's Lyceum. These inhumane acts of violence suggested that if men were willing to reject the rule of law and do all acts which they deem necessary to fulfill their warped idea of justice, then the Constitution was in great danger of falling to the wayside. In Lyceum, Lincoln argued if the American people are able to control their wild passions and force themselves to abide by all laws, then a great reverence for the Constitution will follow.

### ***Lincoln's Political Moderation***

Both the Lyceum and Temperance Address serve as Lincoln's argument to the American people to temper their political passions and, therefore, allow the rule of law to take its due course. Lincoln understood that the United States can only continue as a democratically elected nation if the people learn how to control their politically-charged passions. One of the great dangers of this period of mob rule was that citizens were not allowing the government to execute and enforce the laws. The mobs that lynched men, burnt property, and started rebellions were attempting to execute their own perverted sense of justice. "The increasing disregard for law which pervades the country; the growing disposition to substitute the wild and furious passions, in lieu of sober judgement of Courts; and the worse than savage mobs, for the executive ministers of justice" is the plague that has draped over the American people from the Atlantic to the uncharted west.<sup>38</sup> The generations of Washington and Clay helped transform the nation into a prosperous land, but it was Lincoln's generation that threatened to tear down the nation's political institutions.

When Lincoln addressed the Young Men's Lyceum, he recognized a decaying civilization which was giving itself over to unbridled passions. If the American people were not able to channel these passions, then America will cease to exist. This fear was apparent to Lincoln and explains why he called on "every American, every lover of liberty, every well-wisher to his posterity" to proudly "swear by the blood of the Revolution, never to violate in the least particular, the laws of the country; and never to tolerate their violation by others."<sup>39</sup> In order for America to continue as a self-governing regime, the people must keep their desire to execute their own sense of justice at bay.

Understanding the grave threat facing the United States Lincoln declared to his audience, and to all those who read his remarks through the ages, that every man, woman, and child should take the sacred pledge to never violate the law of the land. Political moderation is knowingly restraining from executing one's own understanding of justice upon those whom he deems to be unjust while, at the same time, allowing the government to fulfil its Constitutional obligations. Lincoln calls this conscious moderation of one's political passions by following all laws "the *political religion* of the nation."<sup>40</sup> The requirements of self-government led Lincoln to connect religious sentiment with responsible democracy. Understanding that a successful republic requires a politically moderated populace, Lincoln believed an appeal to the religious sentiments of American society can help moderate the uninhibited passions in the community which lead to the outbreak of mob rule. As a means to the end of restoring law of rule to the nation, Lincoln calls on the American people to observe the Constitution and laws with an almost religious zeal. As with the many

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<sup>38</sup> Basler, p. 77.

<sup>39</sup> Basler, p. 80.

<sup>40</sup> Basler, p. 80-81. Lincoln's emphasis.

honest and true practitioners of the Abrahamic faiths, so too should the American people dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to the governing dogmas of the Republic. An American citizen should never knowingly violate the laws of the country in the same way a Christian should never violate, let alone question, the commandments of the Messiah. Lincoln believed the American people should look to the Constitution with the same unrequited love that a devoutly religious man has when he casts his eyes upon his messianic figure, as if the laws of the nation came from God himself.

Although there is no established religious institution in the United States, Lincoln argued that this reverence for the law *should* become the national religion. This political religion, while it should be observed with the orthodoxy of a centuries-old institution, can only be cultivated through reason. Unlike a spiritual religion, which one can be raised in from cradle to grave and never truly have a logical grasp, political religion depends on the individual understanding why he must never violate the Constitution and laws. Each generation of Americans must learn for itself the rights and duties of citizenship because, although men are created equal, no one is born understanding the principles and practice of self-government. Lincoln wished to see this reasoned faith to “be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice.”<sup>41</sup> It was the hope that this reverence for the Constitution and its laws becomes engrained in the American mind and penetrates every aspect of American society from the local parish to the highest levels of government.

Americas respect for the Constitution and its laws should be so great that they would never even question violating them, even when the law may be bad. “But I do mean to say, that, although bad laws, if they

exist, should be repealed as soon as possible, still while they continue in force, for the sake of example, they should be religiously observed.”<sup>42</sup> Lincoln argued that even unjust laws should still be religiously observed until those laws are repealed through legislative means. This rational love that Americans should be so engrained into the consciousness of every man, woman, and child, that no one would even question raising arms against the government or the Constitution. Lincoln believed that the public converting to this political faith will moderate their passions and counter any desire a citizen may have to gather and violently execute their own idea of justice.

After laying out an understanding of what form Lincoln’s political moderation should take, it is important to ask how this reverence for the laws becomes a reality. How can the American people cultivate within themselves this political religion in a time of mob rule? Lincoln argued that “reason, cold, calculated, unimpassioned reason, must furnish all the materials for our future support and defense.”<sup>43</sup> Reason, which is the distinctly human capacity to perceive, reflect, and form judgements by a logical process, is the first step in converting to the political religion of America. In using the term “distinctly human”, it is to be understood to mean that no other creature that slithers on the ground or takes flight in the heavens has the ability to reason. Only man has been blessed with this divine spark that separates him from the beast. Reason is one of the cornerstones of man’s nature and is something that is bestowed upon all men at birth, even if the degrees in which it is bestowed varies depending on the person.

Using religiously charged rhetoric to harken back to the American founders and the political institutions they established, Lincoln laments that the founders “were the

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<sup>41</sup> Basler, p. 81.

<sup>42</sup> Basler, p. 81.

<sup>43</sup> Basler, p. 84.

pillars of the temple of liberty” which has “crumbled away” over the years.<sup>44</sup> In order to repair the great pillars that hold up our government, the American people cannot rely on passion as they did in the past. Lincoln calls on the citizenry to “supply [the temple of liberty] with other pillars, hewn from the quarry of sober reason.”<sup>45</sup> These materials collected for the new foundation of America’s government will “be molded into general intelligence, and, in particular, a reverence for the constitution and its laws: and, that we improved to the last; that we remained free to the last.”<sup>46</sup> Lincoln, as he articulates at the conclusion of his remarks to the Young Men’s Lyceum, argued that passion cannot be the only method by which the American people settle political disputes. Although passion “has helped” the generations of Washington and Clay “it can do so no more.”<sup>47</sup> While Lincoln advocates for the creation of new pillars hewn from the quarry of reason, he does not call on the people to suppress all passions. America’s political institutions were set up in such a way as they enable the people channel their passions. Unrequited passion, if not moderated through our political institutions, will one day become our enemy. For Lincoln argued at the beginning of his remarks that America will never be destroyed by “all the armies of Europe and Asia and Africa combined,” but the threat “must spring among us.”<sup>48</sup>

Through both the Temperance Address and his earlier remarks to the Young Men’s Lyceum, Abraham Lincoln presents his most comprehensive and thoughtful analysis of the necessity for political moderation in the United States. This moderation takes the form of the old and revered political religion, which cultivates a reverence for the Constitution and its laws,

ones which are both just and unjust. It is Lincoln’s belief that reason is the lynchpin which cultivates the political religion of America and will result in, someday, the political and moral freedom of mankind. This is the bond that holds Lyceum and Temperance in such close relations and, therefore, emboldens the defense of the importance of Temperance. The unburnished thread of reason and the necessity of political moderation intertwines these two speeches to the point in which one cannot have a full appreciation for either speech without an understanding of the other.

Lincoln, throughout the Temperance Address, demonstrates this understanding of man’s ability to reason when he argued to the Washingtonian Society that the old-school champions understanding of human nature was fundamentally flawed. The failure of the old-school temperance movement was their inability to appeal to the drunkards’ reason and, instead, used the antiquated method of public harassment and condemnation. The strategy of the current movement does not rely on condemnation and anathema, but “*persuasion*, kind, unassuming persuasion” because the “conduct of men is designed to be influenced.”<sup>49</sup> Man cannot affect true change when they are confronted with blunt force and public condemnation because it is not in the nature of man to be influenced through force. Lincoln argued that the conduct of man was designed to be influenced by persuasion and not thunderous tones of denunciation used by previous generations of the movement. Persuasion and friendship, according to Lincoln, are the best methods to tender the mind of man and open the drunkard up to different ideas. It is this “drop of honey that catches his heart, which, say what he will, is the road to his reason.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Basler, p. 84.

<sup>45</sup> Basler, p. 84.

<sup>46</sup> Basler, p. 84-85.

<sup>47</sup> Basler, p. 84.

<sup>48</sup> Basler, p. 77.

<sup>49</sup> Basler, p. 133. Lincoln’s emphasis.

<sup>50</sup> Basler, p. 134.

Lincoln claimed that reason is a noble ally to the cause of political freedom and argued that “with such an aid, its march cannot fail to be on and on, till every son of earth shall drink in rich fruition, the sorrow quenching draughts of perfect liberty.”<sup>51</sup>

It is important to make note that Lincoln’s call for political moderation, and his perception of the relationship between passion and reason, is not a recent philosophical phenomenon. Rather, it is a theory that can be traced back eons to the Platonic tripartite theory of the human soul, which highlights the tension between man’s natural passions and reason. According to Plato, there are three parts of human soul with the first part being *Eros*, or, the erotic and passionate love. The second passion, *Thumos*, is great physical spiritedness which compels men to enter enthusiastically into situations without much consideration for any potential consequences. The third, and the most important, is *Logos*; the rational part of the soul which loves truth and desires to seek it out.

In the dialogue *Phaedrus*, Plato attempted to illustrate his view of the human soul by allegorically comparing the soul to a Charioteer driving a chariot pulled by two winged horses. “Let [the soul] be likened to the union of powers in a team of winged steeds and their winged charioteer.... With us men, in the first place, it is a pair of steeds that the charioteer controls; more-over one of them is noble and good, and of good stock, while the other has the opposite character, and his stock is opposite. Hence the task of our charioteer is difficult and troublesome.”<sup>52</sup> The two winged steeds are symbolic of the two types of passion which exist in human nature. One steed, dominated by the rational and moral impulses, is always attempting to overcome the power of the other steed to and alter the trajectory of the chariot. The other

steed, which is controlled by irrational appetites and destructive tendencies, attempts to the very same thing, albeit, in a different direction. The Charioteer represents man’s ability to reason, which is in a constant struggle to both reign in the conflicting passions which threaten to derail the soul, and strive towards the higher goal of finding truth.

In the allegory, Plato spoke of a great odyssey which souls embark on as they strive to achieve enlightenment and argued that law-abiding civic leaders are among the few people who are truly able to perceive the truth. What is interesting is that in a republican government, where all men are masters of the Constitution, all citizens are civic leaders in some capacity. The right of all Americans to vote, debate, and participate in a larger national dialogue on policy bestows upon the people power which never existed in the populace before. In a nation of individuals and not classes, each man, woman, and child, is responsible for using their reason to regain control over the winged steeds of passion. In doing so, the true practicing of the nation’s political religion of the nation will be achieved. Lincoln, in his call for the American people to convert to this great civil theology, asks that the American people regain control of the winged horses of passion and redirect themselves towards true enlightenment. Much like the two wild horses dominated and directed by uninhibited passion, mob rule in America exemplifies that unrequited passions which threaten the perpetuation of American government. The actions of the radical abolitionists or the pro-slavery mobs decay the foundations of the temple of liberty and leave it open for disintegration and neglect. These two great factions of the American people, like the winged horses who are flying in two different

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<sup>51</sup> Basler, p. 140.

<sup>52</sup> Cairns, Huntington and Edith Hamilton, editors. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*,

*including the Letters*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961, p. 476.

directions, threaten to usurp power and disregard the American government. Fervently adhering to America's political religion is this check on the passions of man and enables the federal government to continue striving towards achieving true political freedom.

### *The Great American Experiment*

The unique political landscape of the American regime, which was established in the revolution of '76 "found a solution of the long-mooted problem, as to the capacity of man to govern himself," enabling the great men of American history to pursue a greater civil and moral liberty among the populace. Unlike the preceding generations of Washington and Clay, Lincoln's generation at this particular moment in our history had no battles to fight with guns and ammunition. Harkening back to Lyceum, "passion has helped us; but can do so no more ... Reason, cold, calculated, unimpassioned reason, must furnish all the materials for our future support and defense."<sup>53</sup> The battles must now be fought with ballots, informed by the divine spark of reason. Passion, which compelled the great oaks of the early Republic to do truly great deeds, must now be channeled through productive avenues to ensure that the passion which created America does not destroy it.

The dangers which Lincoln was presented with when he spoke to the Young Men's Lyceum was that American citizens were resisting the avenues designed by the founders to channel their passions. This mobcratic spirit, which penetrated the hearts and minds of the people, threatened to effectually break down and destroy the American government. Regarding the government as their mortal enemy, these mobs "pervaded the country, from New England to Louisiana;

- they are neither peculiar to the eternal snows of the former, nor the burning suns of the later."<sup>54</sup> There was not a hamlet, city, or plot of land that did not feel the reverberations of the rise and spread of mob rule. This mob mentality refused the wise counsel of reason and took comfort and advice from their baser human instincts which emboldened them to neglect the laws of society. Advocating to see a reverence for our political institutions restored in the hearts, minds, and actions of the American people, Lincoln appealed to the reason that he knew all of them had. This plea to use reflection and choice in the pursuit of legislative and social change instead of accident and force will cultivate within the minds of all American's the political religion of the nation. "Let those materials be moulded into *general intelligence, sound morality*, and, in particular, *a reverence for the constitution and laws*."<sup>55</sup>

Throughout the Lyceum Address and later the Temperance Address, Lincoln attempted to rationalize to the American people why they should hold the Constitution and its laws in such high regard. The argument he presents to his audiences begins with the assertion that the United States, according to Lincoln, is great scientific experiment. The country and its government are subject to the same rigorous testing, processes and held to the same questioning that all other questions worth answering are expected to answer. "[The Founders] ambition aspired to display before an admiring world, a practical demonstration of the truth of a proposition, which had hitherto been considered, at best no better, then problematical; namely, *the capability of a people to govern themselves*."<sup>56</sup> When the founders brought forward their hypothesis that man was capable of self-government, critics were quick to argue that

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<sup>53</sup> Basler, p. 84.

<sup>54</sup> Basler, p. 77-78.

<sup>55</sup> Basler, p. 84-85. Lincoln's emphasis.

<sup>56</sup> Basler, p. 82. Lincoln's emphasis.

some men are too ignorant and too vicious to share in the role of governance.

Looking back at the whole of history it was apparent to all living at the time that man had not been able to successfully establish and maintain a government of, by, and for the people. It is not that man wasn't capable of self-government, but there was simply no political check on the unrequited passions of man. With no encouragement of moderation and near total indulgence in the pleasures of the flesh, mankind subjected themselves to the tyrants and monarchs of the world. However, the hand of Divine Providence seemingly wrote a different destiny when He appointed a small ragtag collection of farmers, merchants, and lawyers on the coast of the North Atlantic to prove that man is in fact capable of controlling his fate and the fate of the nations.

Theirs' was the task (and nobly they performed it) to possess themselves, and through themselves, us, of this goodly land; and to uproar upon its hills and its valleys, a political edifice of liberty and equal rights; 'tis ours only, to transmit these, the former, unprofaned by the foot of the invader; the latter, undecayed by the lapse of time and untorn by usurpation, to the latest generation that fate shall permit the world to know.<sup>57</sup>

With the establishment of the thirteen United States of America, the hardy and brave ancestors declared that man gives consent and legitimacy to the government not the other way around. In this the Founders established a Republic in which the people were masters of the Constitution; who ordained upon the duly elected representatives the power to pass legislation and execute it on their behalf. "[We], the American People, ... find our-

selves under the government of a system of political institutions, conducting more essentially to the ends of civil and religious liberty, than any of which the history of former times tells us."<sup>58</sup> America, according to Lincoln, is the legal inheritor of the fundamental blessings that were still unknown to the rest of the world. In the tumultuous history of the world, most governments have been based, practically, on the denial of the equal rights of men. American civilization, on the other hand, separated itself from every other prince and potentate by declaring man's natural equality. Our political institutions, which were created to secure these rights, were established "by a *once* hardy, brave, and patriotic, but *now* lamented and departed race of ancestors" who found triumph in the political revolution of '76 by finding "a solution of the long-mooted problem, as to the capability of man to govern himself."<sup>59</sup>

The solution that our patriotic ancestors brought forward was the United States Constitution, which channels the political passions of men into three separate branches of government. In a politically free society, the American founders believed that the power must be divided in such a way that no man, let alone one group of men, have total power to legislate, execute, and adjudicate. "Justice is the end of government," according to James Madison in Federalist No. 51, and it is one of the primary responsibilities of the federal government to protect both the powerful and weak factions in society.

In a society, under the forms of which the stronger faction can readily unite and oppress the weaker, anarchy may truly be said to reign, as in a state of nature, where the weaker individual is not secured against the violence against the stronger; and as, in the latter state, even the stronger indivi-

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<sup>57</sup> Basler, p. 77.

<sup>58</sup> Basler, p. 76.

<sup>59</sup> Basler, p. 77. Lincoln's emphasis; Basler, p. 140.

duals are promoted, by the uncertainty of their condition, to submit to a government which may protect the weak, as well as themselves: so, in a former state, will the more powerful factions or parties be gradually induced, by a like motive, to wish for a government which will protect all parties, the weaker as well as the more powerful.<sup>60</sup>

The time in which Lincoln addressed both the Young Men's Lyceum and the Washingtonian Society, the strong factions that Madison warned of took the shape of the mobs that lynched men and burned property. Bursting from their moderated restraints, the American people brought the country back into a state of nature where the government effectually has no power. The mobs were no longer submitting to a government and were only accountable to themselves. With this, Lincoln warned that the law-abiding citizens will become disgusted with a government that offers them no protection from the mobs. "If the laws be continually despised and disregarded, if their rights to be secure in their persons and property, are held by no better tenure than the caprice of a mob, the alienation of their affections from the Government is the natural consequence."<sup>61</sup>

### *The Cause of Political Freedom*

America, noble in its intentions and only human in execution, is the only place capable of ushering in the revolutions necessary to ensure the political freedom of mankind. To use the same metaphor which Lincoln uses at the end of the Temperance Address, the American Founders planted the seeds of political freedom which can only blossom to its greatest potential if it is nurtured and protected. The generations of

Washington and Clay both had their own set of equally difficult challenges to overcome in order to prove the Founder's thesis as to the capability of man to self-govern. Understanding the deleterious effect that mob rule has on the American regime, Lincoln then goes into an explanation as to why revering the laws of the land brings about greater political freedom. When a government becomes ineffective at administering the laws that are written, debated, amended, and approved with the intent to protect the natural rights of man, the political liberties of the American people will cease to exist. When man's reverence for the laws disappear, the political institutions begin to waver. Freedom is always one generation away from extinction.

In a government that is designed to be an ongoing experiment, there must be renewed efforts to preserve our political institutions through a religious zeal for its laws. The rise of mob rule that Lincoln witnessed was the actualization of the prophecy which Madison warned of when he warned of what would happen when a specific faction of men refused to submit to the rule of law. Like a deadly virus that slowly spreads through the healthy body, the inability for the American people to relinquish their ability to execute justice threatens to shut down the integral organs of the body politic. If the chief executors of the law do not have the respect of the people, then the government becomes weak and inefficient; a figurehead with no real power.

This allegorical comparison the body and the body politic permeates the minds of the greatest of poets and philosophers, one whom Lincoln first encountered in the single room houses of rural Indiana. In the opening scene of William Shakespeare's tragedy *Coriolanus*, we find a great company of mutinous citizens are marching towards the

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<sup>60</sup> Carey and McClellan, p. 271.

<sup>61</sup> Basler, p. 80.

Senate. One Roman Senator, Menenius, approaches the protestors and presents a fable worthy of Aesop's approval to explain to the people why the mob mentality was dangerous to the stability of Rome. There was a time when the several members of the body rebelled against the belly and accused it of being idle and inactive, while the rest of the ligaments, limbs, and instruments of the body did the work of moving, instructing, and feeling. The belly, in response to this uprising, responded with the following explanation:

“True it is, my incorporate friends,”  
quoth he,  
“That I receive the general food at  
first,  
Which you do live upon; and fit it is,  
Because I am the storehouse and the shop  
Of the whole body. But, if you do  
remember,  
I send it through the rivers of your  
blood  
Even to the court, the heart, to th’ seat  
o’ th’ brain;  
And, through the cranks and offices  
of man,  
The strongest nerves and small  
inferior veins  
From me receive that natural  
competency  
Whereby they live ...  
Though all at once cannot  
See what I do deliverer out to each,  
Yet I can make my audit up that all  
From me do back receive the flour of  
all,  
And leave me but the brain.” (I.1.128-  
143)<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Orgel, Stephen and A.R. Braunmuller, *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*. “The Tragedy of Coriolanus.” New York, Penguin Putnam Inc., 2002, p. 1711-1712

While it is unknown if Lincoln read *Coriolanus* specifically, it can be easily surmised that based off his devote love of Shakespeare and his understanding of republicanism, there is indeed a philosophical connection between the two. In this scenario, Menenius argued that the government of Rome is the belly and the citizens were the mutinous members of the body. The debates and deliberations which occur in the government digest the policy questions that touch the affairs of the common people. “You shall find/ no public benefit which you receive/ but it proceeds or comes from them to you, and no way from yourselves.”<sup>63</sup> To bridge the divide between Shakespeare and Lincoln, the federal government is equivocal to the belly and the mobs that are lynching, burning, and destroying property are the rebelling limbs.

Like Shakespeare, Lincoln believed that that the belly (i.e. the government) is designated to absorb the digested things and delegate the appropriate nutrients to the various parts of the body (i.e. the people). Without the belly, there is no agent to keep the various limbs of the body active and surviving. Without the federal government channeling the passions of the individuals, the American people would not be able to achieve the great ends which the Founders put forward for their descendants to fulfil. Lincoln's reasoning for the people to convert to the civil theology of the country in both Temperance and Lyceum eerily mirrors Menenius' plea to see reason through the allegory of the belly. When Lincoln's political religion becomes indoctrinated into every man, woman, and child, the political institutions of the country will be able to fulfill their constitutional obligations to the best of their ability and the American people will “remain free to the last.”<sup>64</sup> The belly will be able to

<sup>63</sup> Orgel and Braunmuller, p. 1712

<sup>64</sup> Basler, p. 85.

delegate the appropriate amounts of nutrients to all the parts of the body, never giving one less or more than they need.

Lincoln believed that the people who are best able to moderate their political passions, who wear to never violate the Constitution and its laws, and who allow the government to execute its responsibilities, will be the ones who will bring about the political and moral freedom of species, as he articulates at the conclusion of the Temperance Address.

And when that victory shall be complete – when there shall be neither a slave nor drunkard on the earth – how proud the title of that *Land*, which may truly claim to be the birthplace and cradle of both these revolutions, that shall have ended in that victory. How nobly distinguished that People, who shall have planted and nurtured to maturity, both the political and moral freedom of the species.<sup>65</sup>

The American experiment in self-government, firmly established in the political revolution of '76, proved that man was capable of governing himself. In this revolutionary sentiment “was the germ which has vegetated, and still is to grow and expand into the universal liberty of mankind.”<sup>66</sup> The edifice of political rights and social equality, that is etched into the hills and valleys of our vast country is not confined to the space between the coasts of the Pacific and the Atlantic. Lincoln believed this edifice of political freedom will sweep over the waters and make its mark seen across the world. However, the period of lawlessness that Lincoln saw himself in threatened to end our experiment abruptly. The germ of an idea that was planted in '76 would have never taken root

and the universal liberty of mankind would never come to fruition. If that were to happen, then the American people’s inability to moderate their political and moral passions would have proven to the world that man *wasn't* capable of governance. In this fear lies the necessity for a strict adherence to the political religion of the nation.

The fulfillment of the promise to never violate the laws of the nation is greater proof that a government of, by, and for the people is capable of being sustained and passed on from generation to generation. Should it fail, republicanism will be cataloged as a brief moment in the long history of the world and left to be forgotten. However, if man is able to moderate himself, it will not only survive but thrive. With the political institutions of America secured, the political freedom of man will thrive and spread to all people around the world. Upon cold, unimpassioned reason will “the proud fabric of freedom rest, as the rock of its basis; and as truly as has been said of the only greater institution, “*the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*”<sup>67</sup> The freedom of the American people depends on the people’s ability to resist the urge to take the power to execute justice into their hands, and whether they decide to cast off the yoke of government.

By viewing the Temperance Address through the lens of Lincoln’s remarks to the Young Men’s Lyceum, we are able to discern his comprehensive argument for the necessity of political moderation. Not only does a moderated populace allow for the perpetuation of our political institutions, but it ensures the political and civil liberties of man is protected. While the Lyceum Address speaks heavily on these themes, one must look at Temperance in order to understand the ends which Lincoln believed in which the aspirations of the nation do not end at the geograph-

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<sup>65</sup> Basler, p. 141.

<sup>66</sup> Basler, p. 140.

<sup>67</sup> Basler, p. 85. Lincoln’s emphasis.

ical borders. “Every son of earth” should drink “the sorrow quenching draughts of perfect liberty.”<sup>68</sup> The governments cultivation of moderation in the citizens and the peoples reciprocal reverence for the laws is the surest way to ensure that the United States government continues on after we are gone.

### CHAPTER THREE: Reign of Reason, All Hail!

**“Happy day, when, all appetites controlled, all passions subdued, all matter subjected, mind, all conquering mind, shall live and move the monarch of the world.”**

– *Abraham Lincoln, Temperance Address*<sup>69</sup>

**“Intemperance in nature is tyranny.”**

– *William Shakespeare, The Tragedy of Macbeth: King of Scotland*<sup>70</sup>

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In the early years of Abraham Lincoln’s life, literature was sparse on the farmlands of the Midwest. The few books Lincoln could get his hands on, he used to great effect. Such books included the first six books of Euclid, Weems’ *Life of Washington*, Aesop’s Fables, the King James Bible, and the works of William Shakespeare. Lincoln was known for memorizing great lengths of passages and reciting them from heart to anyone who would listen. During his presidency, Lincoln wrote a letter to renowned Shakespearean actor James Hackett, whose appearances in Washington gave Lincoln much pleasure, to offer some critiques on the Bards works. “Some of Shakespeare’s plays

I have never read, whilst others I have gone over perhaps as frequently as any unprofessional reader. Among the latter are Lear, Richard Third, Henry Eighth, Hamlet, and especially Macbeth. I think none equals Macbeth. It is wonderful.”<sup>71</sup> Lincoln confessed that during his time in Washington he read little else outside of Shakespeare for recreation, sometimes tittering on becoming the American equivalent of Prospero. For Lincoln, the greater catalogue of Shakespeare – whether the play in question be tragedy, comedy or history - were not simply spectacle but a route to a deeper understanding of power, politics, and human nature.

### *The Demon of Intemperance*

Although he was more prone to use Shakespearean sentiments and rhetoric when he was an elected official, Lincoln began to use the Bard in his public speeches as early as the Temperance Address. Lincoln’s theatrical rhetoric found at the end of the speech was a direct reference to his favorite of Shakespeare’s plays, *Macbeth*. Striking an optimistic tone when looking forward to the future of the country, Lincoln spoke of a promising future where man is not controlled by passions alone but by the light of reason. Believing that alcohol is the great tyrant over the oppressed drunkard, Lincoln envisioned an era where man is able to combat against this tyrannical agent. “All passions subdued, all matters subjected, *mind*, all conquering mind, shall live and move the monarchs of the world.... **Hail**, fall of Fury! Reign of Reason, **all hail!**”<sup>72</sup> This rhetorical structure, which Lincoln used to great effect at the conclusion of his Temperance Address, echoes a similar structure which his literary

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<sup>68</sup> Basler, p. 140.

<sup>69</sup> Basler, p. 140.

<sup>70</sup> Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Macbeth: King of Scotland* Act 4, Scene III, 66-79

<sup>71</sup> Basler, p. 718-719.

<sup>72</sup> Basler, p. 140. Lincoln’s and Author’s emphasis.

sage used in *Macbeth* when the renowned Scottish General stumbled upon three prophetic witches in the moors of Scotland.

3. Witch **Hail!**

1. Witch Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

2. Witch Not so happy, yet much happier.

3. Witch Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.

So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!

1. Witch Banquo and Macbeth, **all hail!**<sup>73</sup>

This dramatic structure is unique in Shakespeare's cannon. Noted scholar John Channing Briggs, in his book *Lincoln's Speeches Reconsidered*, notes that the alternation of "hail" and "all hail" can be found nowhere else in Shakespeare's extensive library, and is a signature of this famous scene.<sup>74</sup> With this Shakespearean allusion, Lincoln links the demonic power of alcohol to moral tyranny and provides a unique introduction to the second argument for the installation of the Temperance Address into the pantheon of Lincolnian scholarship.

The previous chapter spoke on the dangers of political tyranny, exhibited through mob rule. This chapter will explore the concept of, and remedy to, moral tyranny. The moral tyrant, which continues to reign over the innocent souls who lack the strength to combat it, is alcohol. Aside from being Lincoln's favorite play, *Macbeth* also serves as a cautionary tale for one who is unable to control his passions. The tragedy tells the story of the brave and illustrious Scottish general named Macbeth who receives a prophecy from three witches that he would one day be crowned the King of Scotland. Spurred on by his villainous wife, Macbeth murders the sitting sovereign, King Duncan, and usurps the throne, crowning himself

king. Macbeth becomes overcome with guilt, relying on alcohol to numb the paranoia which has festered in his mind. Forced to kill both friends and enemies to secure his dynasty, and protect himself from suspicion, Macbeth soon devolves from a respected leader to a tyrant. Forced to defend his authority from Malcolm, the son of Duncan, Scotland becomes engulfed in a bloody civil war. At the end, however, the prophecy which predicted Macbeth's ascension also foresaw his quick and abrupt downfall. For Lincoln, the titular character, intoxicated and tormented by his proclivity for liquor and fulfilling his prophesized destiny, embodies the dangers of both political and moral intemperance.

Reflecting on the danger of intemperance, Shakespeare, through the character Macduff, laments that "Boundless intemperance/ In nature is a tyranny. It hath been the untimely emptying of the happy throne/ And the fall of many kings."<sup>75</sup> Macbeth's tragic downfall is a thematically rich reservoir from which Lincoln drew upon in order to support his argument in the Temperance Address about the temptations to drink, among other more political dangers. The Shakespearean allusion to *Macbeth* in the Temperance Address also serves as an appropriate demonstration of what happens when man is subjected to moral tyranny. Macbeth's proclivity to alcohol and his desire to acquire political power at any cost shows a lack of moderation on the character's part. Because Macbeth lacked moderation, he was not able to stop himself from indulging in these passions which compelled him to murder friends and drink to forget about the sin. *Macbeth* serves as Shakespeare's dark and theatrical fable to warn of the dangers of succumbing to intemperance. Recognizing

<sup>73</sup> Shakespeare, William. Lander, Jesse M., editor. *The Tragedy of Macbeth: King of Scotland*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2007, p. 63. Author's emphasis.

<sup>74</sup> Briggs, John Channing. *Lincoln's Speeches Reconsidered*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005, p. 72-73

<sup>75</sup> Act 4, Scene III, 66-79

the dangers of alcoholism, the American temperance movement made it their mission to counter the destructive nature of intemperance with complete abstention from alcohol of any kind, for they feared that man is too easily corrupted by the tempting nature of vices. Understanding that intemperance, taking the form of alcoholism, and temperance itself are forms of moral tyranny, Lincoln used the Temperance Address to submit to the public his remedy to the problem.

### ***Human Nature: God's Irreversible Decree***

The Temperance Address, without the aid of any other of Lincoln's speeches, presents a thoughtful analysis of human nature and, in doing so, puts forward his argument as to why man must knowingly moderate his passions. Before addressing the problems of moral tyranny which the American people faced and Lincoln's proposed remedy, it is important to speak in detail about his understanding of human nature. Lincoln's remarks to the Springfield Washington Temperance Society is, first and foremost, a speech about *how to persuade human beings*. Being able to persuade human beings is a valuable skill. To this point, Lincoln asserted that man "*must* be understood by those who would lead him, even to his best interest."<sup>76</sup> Lincoln spoke as if the new stewards of the temperance movement had the ability to reverse the corruption of intemperance. After all, the new stewards transformed the movement "from a cold, abstract theory, to a living, breathing, active, and powerful chieftain, going forth 'conquering and to conquer.'"<sup>77</sup> The movement's new-found ability to raise the drunkard from his lowly station was almost entirely because the

new stewards had a better understanding of human nature.

The first inkling of what Lincoln believed to be human nature can be found in his critique of the old crusaders of the temperance movement. Lincoln asserted that the old-school movement failed in their efforts because they indulged in "too much denunciation against the dram sellers and dram drinkers."<sup>78</sup> This lack of tact on the part of the old reformers is unjust, according to Lincoln, because "it is not much in the nature of man to be driven to anything; still less to be driven about that which is exclusively his own business; and least of all, where such driving is to be submitted to, at the expense of pecuniary interest or burning appetite."<sup>79</sup> The first generation of the movement was infamous for condemning both the dram-drinker and seller for bringing about all the misery and crime in the land. For the temperance movement, alcohol was a great tyrannical master that enslaved the innocent and suppressed them physically, mentally, and morally.

The generation of the lawyers, preachers, and hired agents declared with gnashing teeth that the drunkards were a subservient class who were "the manufactures and material of all the thieves and robbers and murders that infested the earth" and should be "shunned by the good and virtuous."<sup>80</sup> Instead of employing sophist methods through fallacious arguments with the intent of deceiving the drunkard, the old generation of the temperance movement used tones of thunderous denunciation. It is Lincoln's belief that man is a creature designed to be persuaded through arguments tethered to reason and not these public outcries of disgust.

To have expected them to do otherwise than as they did – to have ex-

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<sup>76</sup> Basler, p. 134.

<sup>77</sup> Basler, p. 131.

<sup>78</sup> Basler, p. 133.

<sup>79</sup> Basler, p. 133.

<sup>80</sup> Basler, p. 133.

pected them not to meet denunciation with denunciation, crimination with crimination, and anathema with anathema, was to expect a reversal of human nature, which is God's decree and never can be reversed. When the conduct of men is designed to be influenced, persuasion, kind, unassuming, *persuasion*, should ever be adopted.<sup>81</sup>

To expect the habitual drunkard to renounce his ways by condemning him would be equivalent to believing that man is capable of reshaping man's nature. The old-school movement believed that the best way to get through to the drunkard was to publicly ridicule. However, the results were not promising to the movement. These antiquated methods did nothing but drive the drunkard deeper and deeper into his own self-induced tyranny. In response to the public denunciation, the aggravated drunkards were quick to stand up and denounce the movement with the very language which was used intentionally to emancipate the drunkard. Due to their failures, the old generation grew to believe that all drunkards were utterly incorrigible, and therefore must be turned adrift to fend for themselves.

This was not lost on Abraham Lincoln. Using uncharacteristically aggressive language, Lincoln called the old generations "fiendishly selfish, so like throwing fathers and brothers overboard, to lighten the boat for our security – that the noble minded shrank from the manifest meanness of the thing."<sup>82</sup> With the hope that only the temperate can carry on this vision of moral superiority, the old-school reformers believed that after many years all of man would be inherently temperate. The aggressive and selfish tactics used by the temperance move-

ment were an attempt to modify and alter human nature. Lincoln argued that human nature is not malleable, but "God's decree and never can be reversed." Unlike man's character or behavior, which can be reformed, human nature is rigid and unmoving. Human nature is a fixed point in existence that no force on earth can amend. In his later remarks regarding the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, dated Oct. 16, 1854, Lincoln stated that man may "repeal all compromises – repeal the declaration of independence – repeal all of human history" but he "still can not repeal human nature."<sup>83</sup>

Human nature is a force that cannot be overpowered but it can be persuaded. The old temperance movement, with their aggressive methods, wished to overpower human nature and, in doing so, alter how human beings think and act. The movement believed that human nature was infinitely malleable and susceptible to change by force and time. As a method of producing change, persuasion recognizes that human nature is in fact not malleable and, therefore, cannot be overpowered. Persuasion is not a form of overpowering, as it does not achieve its ends through force; it relies on consent and an appeal to man's reason that the act of overpowering would ignore. Instead of attempting to reshape human nature, the new stewards of the temperance movement attempted to *appeal* to human nature. The current generation, made up mostly of reformed drunkards, had a profoundly deep and philanthropic "desire to convince and persuade" their "old friends and companions."<sup>84</sup> In adopting this charitable method of persuasion, the newer generation of the temperance movement showed their rational and compassionate understanding of man's nature.

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<sup>81</sup> Basler, p. 133. Lincoln's emphasis.

<sup>82</sup> Basler, p. 136.

<sup>83</sup> Basler, p. 309.

<sup>84</sup> Basler, p. 134.

### *The Great High Road to Reason*

While Lincoln never denied that alcoholism is an evil that should be eradicated, he did argue that the way the old-school movement went about solving the problem was misguided and unjust. For Lincoln, there were more just ways to emancipate the drunkard from his tyrannical overlord. The new stewards of the temperance movement believed this too, and, based off their understanding of human nature, went about creating a strategy to appeal to the drunkards' humanity. Lincoln, when speaking of man, ascribed to an old and true maxim "that a drop honey catches more flies than a gallon of gall."<sup>85</sup> When a pesky fruit fly is meant to be caught and disposed of, a homeowner does not put out a dish of vinegar to attract and ensnare the fly. Vinegar, with high levels of acetic acid, repels the fly. Honey, on the other hand, with its light color and sugary composition, is a tempting sight for the average fruit fly. With its sweet taste, honey is the much more appealing alternative to vinegar and, therefore, will attract more flies and compel them to land on the sweet nectar and become stuck. So too with man. For Lincoln argued that if "you would win a man to your cause, *first* convince him that you are his sincere friend. Therein is a drop of honey that catches his heart."<sup>86</sup> Persuasion, kind, unassuming, persuasion, is the sweet nectar which "is the great high road to [man's] reason."<sup>87</sup> This is the first step to lift the moral tyranny of alcohol from the shoulders of the drunkard.

It is here where Lincoln once again points us to the importance of reason in emancipating oneself from both political and moral tyranny. Reason, a distinctly human capacity which serves as a cornerstone of man's character, is the second step in persuading man that the reformers cause is in

fact wrong. Once the drunkard is seduced by the compassion of one who appears to be friendly, then the one persuading must appeal to the drunkard's natural ability to reason. There would be no problem in convincing him of the goodness in the cause, if the cause really is a just one. If a temperate man assumes he has superiority over the drunkard, then the drunkard will close off all avenues to his head and heart. Even Herculean force and precision cannot persuade a man who has been bombarded with obscenity and condemnation that he is wrong. Practical philanthropy, embedded by kindness and kindled by generosity, is the only way to open man's eye to the naked truth.

Reason exists in all human beings no matter what its degree. Lincoln's argument that an appeal to reason through compassionate acts is the strongest one to successfully emancipate the drunkard. Applying Lincoln's strategic plan for the temperance movement accounts for the concern that the drunkard must be sober to reason. Even the drunkard, though his mental faculties may be muddled and clouded by the abuse of alcohol, holds the ability to reason. Sobriety, as the willing choice to not become intoxicated, enables man to exercise his faculties to his greatest extent. The extent in which man can apply this faculty depends on the extent to which he drinks; the more he drinks, the more his ability to reason becomes dull and unresponsive. Drunkenness distorts this natural ability to perceive the world around him and to make sound judgments. There comes a point for the drunkard that he is not able to reason for himself, and he must rely on the compassion of others to aide him through basic tasks to ensure that he does not hurt himself or others. However, this temporary lapse of judgment does not deny man's ability to reason. Simply because the drunkard may not have full use of his faculties

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<sup>85</sup> Basler, p. 133-134.

<sup>86</sup> Basler, p. 134.

<sup>87</sup> Basler, p. 134.

when he is intoxicated does not mean they never were there in the first place, or that they cannot resume.

Lincoln's argument for using persuasion towards the drunkard harkens back to the discussion of the Platonic tripartite theory of the soul from the previous chapter. Plato spoke of the tripartite theory in several volumes of his writings, including *The Republic*, arguably his most notable work. In *The Republic*, Plato wrote a dialogue between his master, Socrates, and several other Athenians which takes place over the course of an evening. Plato argued that the three constituent parts of the human soul are: *epitumia*, which is ascribed to bodily passions and *nous*, which is reason. "So we won't be irrational," I said, "if we claim they are two and different from each other, naming the part of the soul with which it calculates, the calculating, and the part which it loves, hungers, thirsts and is agitated by the other desires, the irrational and desiring, companion of certain replenishments and pleasures."<sup>88</sup> In a spirited conversation with Glaucon, Socrates inquired if there is in fact a third part of the soul. While doing so, Socrates compared the soul to the city and argued that the soul must be a trinity of factors; the third component of the soul is *thumos*, which characterizes the elements that enables man to exhibit large emotions and makes man spirited.

"Is it then different from the calculating part as well, or is it particular form of it so that there aren't three forms in the soul, but two, the calculating and the desiring? Or just as there were three classes in the city that held it together, money-making, auxiliary, and deliberative, is there in the soul too this third, the spirited, by

nature an auxiliary to the calculating part it it's not corrupted by bad rearing?"

"Necessarily," he said, "there is the third."<sup>89</sup>

According to Plato, the concept of *thumos*, much like a regiment of soldiers to the Commander-in-Chief, serves the needs of the deliberative faction of the soul, *logos*. Man's spiritedness, therefore, is designed to be used at the discretion of his reason to fulfill all that which would ensure the continued prosperity of the individual. If let loose to its own devices, man's spiritedness can be easily corrupted if allowed to be dictated by the passions of man and used as a weapon to suppress his reason.

The drunkard who laid in the streets of towns across the American frontier allowed his *epitumia* to take control over his *thumos* and, in the process, suppressed his *logos*. Lincoln's call to adopt a strategy built on "*persuasion*, kind, unassuming persuasion" which seeks to first "convince him that you are his sincere friend" is an appeal to man's *thumos*.<sup>90</sup> The temperance movements who appealed to the drunkard's heart, his spiritedness, served as a "drop of honey that catches his heart, which, say what he will, is the great high road to his reason."<sup>91</sup> In showing kindness and compassion through these appeals to the drunkard's heart, the temperance movement hopes to reach his mind, or his *logos*. Once the reformer has proven to the drunkard that he is, in fact, a friend and not a foe, Lincoln argued that the reformer will have no problem convincing the drunkard that he is a slave to the demon of intemperance. "... [Y]ou will find but little trouble in convincing his judgement of the justice of your cause, if indeed that cause

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<sup>88</sup> Bloom, Allan, translator and editor. *The Republic of Plato: Second Edition*. New York: Basic Books, 1968, p. 119, Book IV 439d.

<sup>89</sup> Bloom, p. 120, Book IV 440e-441a.

<sup>90</sup> Basler, p. 133-134. Lincoln's emphasis.

<sup>91</sup> Basler, p. 134.

really be a just one.”<sup>92</sup> While there is no indication from the numerous historical records and person recollections that Lincoln ever read the works of Plato, the philosophical similarities between the two thinkers illustrates yet again that the truth is not relative.<sup>93</sup> Lincoln, in yet another instance of great minds speaking to each other across the ages, finds solace in the philosophy of Plato to argue with confidence that finding the appropriate avenue to the drunkard’s heart will light the way to his reason.

### *Lincoln’s Moral Moderation*

In the Shakespearean prophecy nestled among the final paragraphs of the Temperance Address, Lincoln asserted that the evils of uninhibited passions that consume the lives of many can be combated against with reason. If the human mind is freed from the shackles alcoholism has placed upon it, then it is free to think deeply, to live a healthy life, and, arguably most important, to fight against the desire to inappropriately indulge any vice. Yet this reign of reason does not necessarily assume that all vices should be eliminated preemptively in an attempt to protect the reformed drunkard. The Washingtonian Society, and the greater temperance movement, sought to abstain from drinking altogether with the hope that consuming it would constitute a criminal activity. On the contrary, Lincoln argued that all the passions and appetites of man should be subdued, not snuffed out. The new world order Lincoln spoke of is not one where man is not without his alcohol, but one where man is able to

moderate himself in his consumption. After all, Lincoln argued that alcoholism is in fact “the *abuse* of a *very good* thing.”<sup>94</sup> Living a temperate life himself, Lincoln believed that the desire to drink was something that some men were born without but that does not make them better than the one who does drink. Living a naturally temperate life is just as natural as living with a desire for a drink or two, but it is important to know one’s own limits. Differentiating from the temperance movement, Lincoln does not argue for a society totally void of alcohol, but a moderated society.

The virtue of moral moderation is not simply a philosophic one, because it is not based simply on intellect. Moderation has real world consequences if it is not practiced and can bring about positive results if it is adhered to. Lincoln believed that moderation, much like freedom itself, is a choice that has to be made by the individual; and that choice can only be made when the drunkard’s reason is appealed to. To recognize the error of one’s ways takes a great deal of reason, and to recognize and openly admit that one is a slave to alcohol takes an even greater proportion of one’s natural ability. Not only that, but to promise to himself and to the community at large that he will live a moderate life and work towards that end earnestly and diligently requires mental faculties that, up until that moment, were suppressed. However, once the mind has usurped the demons of intemperance and assumed the responsibilities as the sovereign over man, then the moral reformation becomes a fortified fixture in man’s character. Reason is not something that can simply be pulled out of the arsenal and used at ready, because it is not easily

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<sup>92</sup> Basler, p. 134.

<sup>93</sup> While there is no evidence that Mr. Lincoln read the works of Plato, there is evidence to suggest that he was at least aware of the philosopher and his thoughts. In a second lecture on Discoveries and Inventions, dated Feb. 11, 1859, Mr. Lincoln speaks of the great

passions young America has and its similarities to that of the Platonic understanding of passion. “As Plato had for the immortality of the soul, so Young America has ‘a pleasing hope – a fond desire – a longing after’ territory.”

<sup>94</sup> Basler, p. 135. Lincoln’s emphasis.

accessible for a drunkard. Though the drunkard does possess this fundamental tenet of human nature, as does every man and woman, it does not mean that it can be relied on when corrupted by the tyrannical nature of intemperance. It is here where the temperance movement, casting off the tarnished legacy of their predecessors, worked to appeal to man's reason by reaching out the hand of friendship in the hope that the drunkard would come to understand that their cause is in fact right and just.

## CHAPTER FOUR: Our National Salvation

**“Washington is the mightiest name of earth – *long since* mightiest in the cause of civil liberty; *still* mightiest in moral reformation. On that name, a eulogy is expected. It cannot be. To add brightness to the sun, or glory in the name of Washington, is alike impossible.”**

– *Abraham Lincoln, Temperance Address*<sup>95</sup>

**“May it be to the world, what I believe it will be, (to some parts sooner, to other parts later, but finally to all), the signal of arousing men to burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition have persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self-government.”**

– *Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Roger C. Weightman, 1826*<sup>96</sup>

More so than any other time in American history, the name of George Washington was never more revered than in the first few decades of the nineteenth century. With the veterans of the American Revolution still alive and the greatness of Washington still fresh in their minds, Washington was rightfully adored as the nation's patriarch. His birthday, situated in the middle of February, was greeted with great fanfare by the people, akin to the modern-day celebrations which take place on Memorial Day. Parades and public celebrations were organized and executed with great enthusiasm in nearly every hamlet and city from the Atlantic to the Mississippi.

It is, therefore, no surprise that Abraham Lincoln, both his philosophical and presidential successor, appealed to the illustrious legacy of Washington at the conclusion of both the Lyceum Address and the Temperance Address. Lincoln declared that with a strict adherence to the law “we permitted no hostile foot to pass over or desecrate his resting place ... [and] awaken our WASHINGTON.”<sup>97</sup> In showing reverence to the laws of the nation, Lincoln believed the people would show reverence to Washington. The day that Lincoln delivered the Temperance Address, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1842, was the one hundred and tenth anniversary of Washington's birth. Lincoln acknowledged that the purpose of the lecture was to celebrate Washington's birth. Moving beyond the recognition of this fact, Lincoln began to address the remarkable legacy Washington left for the American people to aspire to.

Washington is the mightiest name of earth – *long since* mightiest in the cause of civil liberty; *still* mightiest in

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<sup>95</sup> Basler, p. 141.

<sup>96</sup> Peterson, Merrill D., ed. *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*. New York: Library of America, 1984, p. 1516-1517.

<sup>97</sup> Basler, p. 85. Lincoln's emphasis.

moral reformation. On that name an eulogy is expected. It cannot be. To add brightness to the sun, or glory to the name of Washington, is alike impossible. Let none attempt it. In solemn awe pronounce the name, and in its naked deathless splendor, leave it shining on.<sup>98</sup>

For Abraham Lincoln and his fellow countrymen, George Washington was the paradigm of moderation. The legacy of America's first statesman does not solely depend on the successes of his generalship and influence in crafting the presidency, but also in his moral virtues. In both civil and moral affairs, Washington acted with the moderation of a stoic. General Washington's character, much like that of the legendary Roman figure, Brutus, "was gentle, and the elements/ So mixed in him that nature might stand up/ And say to the world "This was a man."<sup>99</sup> Eulogizing Washington and appealing to his magnanimity at the end of the Temperance Address was Lincoln's final plea directed towards the American people to live a moderate life. It was Lincoln's belief that a moderated citizenry would bring about the political and moral freedom of the species, and that the nation best equipped to do so was the United States.

### ***Washington: The Mightiest Name of Earth***

To understand the great extent of Washington's moderation is to understand what Abraham Lincoln was trying to convey to his audience on that cold February day. Washington's actions as both General and President in advocating for moral and political moderation earned him the respect and

admiration of the people far and wide. "Washington is the mightiest name of earth – long since in the cause of civil liberty; still mightiest in moral reformation."<sup>100</sup> During Lincoln's time, Washington was first in the hearts of his countrymen. His name, when invoked, warrants respect and admiration across the nation to this very day. The appeal to his greatness which Lincoln made at the end of the Temperance Address is his call to the American people to inculcate within themselves the same moderation Washington exhibited.

Regarding Lincoln's assessment that the late General's name was "*still* mightiest in moral reformation," Washington was often dismayed by the lack of moderation exhibited by the men under his leadership. Wherever the army would go, the soldiers would display a certain degree of moral debauchery, a vice that Washington was determined to eradicate. Washington was not just a citizen-soldier, but a citizen-statesman who wanted to uphold high standards of conduct in the camp. The General, according to renowned historian Ron Chernow, "wished them to be more than superb soldiers: they should set an example for patriots everywhere."<sup>101</sup> To accomplish this, Washington espoused the virtues he believed to be desirable and condemned the vices his men were quick to revel in. When faced with almost certain defeat, with the largest army in the history of the world outwitting him nearly every step of the way, and amid the chaos and squalor of the army camp, Washington constantly advocated for civilized conduct becoming of free men.

Among the many moral failings that irked him, none enraged Washington more than alcohol abuse. The tyrannical nature of alcohol corrupted men's minds and prevented

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<sup>98</sup> Basler, p. 141. Lincoln's emphasis.

<sup>99</sup> Orgel and Braunmuller, "The Tragedy of Julius Caesar." V.II.67-74.

<sup>100</sup> Basler, p. 141. Author's emphasis.

<sup>101</sup> Chernow, Ron. *Washington: A Life*. New York, New York: Penguin Group, Inc. p. 209.

them from acting in the thoughtful and respectful manner becoming of an independent people. Over time, he grew authoritarian in his punishments against drunkards, and not just within the parameters of the army camp. Washington was also quick to punish servants at Mount Vernon for the same errors the soldiers committed. In his personal crusade to moderate the men of his army, Washington sentenced countless men who were caught drunk to be dealt dozens of lashes and began regulating the quantity that dram sellers were allowed to deliver to the camp. The biggest problem regarding his strict policy was that strong drink fortified and ignited the morale of the troops. In a letter to John Hancock, Washington wrote that the “benefits arising from moderate use of liquor have been experienced in all armies and are not to be disputed.”<sup>102</sup> Though drunkenness was intolerable, moderate consumption was almost a necessity to lift the spirits of the soldiers, especially during the long winter nights. Washington’s stance on drunkenness was strict, but well intentioned. If sentencing drunkards to be lashed and limiting the amount of alcohol permitted in the camp meant a more moderate army, then Washington was content knowing he had achieved his objective to cultivate an army worthy of the freedom they were fighting for.

Politically, Washington was no different in his characteristic moderation. He rejected the concept of mob-rule and a government ordained by force. In 1783, a great number of soldiers and commanders were growing frustrated at the slow progress Congress was making in securing the funds for back pay and pensions. Money was promised to the soldiers and took a glacier’s

pace to deliver them. Enraged at the supposed lack of care towards the issue, a great number of soldiers came together and planned what became known as the Newburgh Conspiracy. Should Congress fail to act in accordance with the wishes of the army and deliver the promised funds, the army would march to Philadelphia and dissolve Congress. The mutineers planned that in place of the incompetent legislature, General Washington would be installed as the sole sovereign ruler.

When Washington learned of this insidious plot, he ordered his men to meet him. Though he too was frustrated with the lack of progress on Congress’s part, Washington could not stomach an army descending into mob-rule at a moment in history where true political freedom was closer than ever. Washington promised his men that he would continue his strenuous efforts on their behalf and urged them to uphold the elected representatives of the newly formed political institutions and to give them time to solve the problems, rather than “opening the flood-gates of civil discontent.”<sup>103</sup> It was at this point that, according to reports, Washington pulled out a letter from Congressman Joseph Jones of Virginia and uncharacteristically stumbled over the opening words. Flustered and becoming red in the face, Washington pulled out a new pair of spectacles and fitted them to his head saying, “Gentlemen, you must pardon me. I have grown gray in your service and now find myself growing blind.”<sup>104</sup> The great military giant was a tired old man. His men wept at the sight of their general, the sacrifices he made, and his willingness to put his faith in the political institutions of the infant nation.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Chernow, p. 209.

<sup>103</sup> Fitzpatrick, John C., editor. *The Writings of George Washington, Vol. 26*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1938.

<sup>104</sup> Douglas Southall Freeman, *George Washington: A Biography, Vol. V, Victory*

with the Help of the French. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1952, p. 435.

<sup>105</sup> In December 1783, after the American Revolution was fought and won, Washington addressed the Continental Congress and announced his intent to resign his military

The moderation of Washington was once in a generation, not to be seen again in the public sphere for many years. It was something that Lincoln believed all people should attempt to emulate. Lincoln appealed to a man who embodied the best of what this nation could be in the last few sentences of the Temperance Address to rally the American people to action. If the American people made earnest progress to moderate their political and moral passions in the name of Washington, then Lincoln believed they would grow to gain the moderation Washington possessed. In the quest for political and moral freedom, Lincoln believed the American people needed someone to set their eyes upon. Although they will not obtain the characteristic moderation of Washington, the people will be more moderate than if they had no one to aspire towards. With their eyes set upon a great man like George Washington, Lincoln believed the American people will accomplish wonders, as they bring about the political and moral salvation of the nation.

### ***The Political and Moral Salvation of the Nation***

The American experiment in self-government, cultivated through reflection and choice and not through accident and force, proved once and for all that man was capable of governing himself. “In it the world

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commission. “Having now finished the work assigned to me, I retire from the great theatre of action, and bidding an affectionate farewell to this august body, under whose orders I have so long acted, I here offer my commission, and take my leave of all the employments of public life.” As a testament to his republican principles, Washington willingly surrendered power of the army back to the very governmental body that first appointed him. Later on, after he was brought back into the political arena to serve two terms as the first President of the United States, Washington once more demonstrated

has found a solution of the long-mooted problem, as to the capability of man to govern himself.”<sup>106</sup> Lincoln believed, as did the American Founders, that the revolution of ’76 was the germ which has vegetated and will continue to grow and expand into the universal liberty of mankind. Recognizing the unique nature of America’s founding and the dogmatic truths the nation was founded upon, Lincoln fervently believed the American people had a distinct advantage over other people of the world. However, this perfect truth could only be executed by imperfect creatures. In the Temperance Address, Lincoln lamented that “with all these glorious results, past, present, and to come, it had its evils too. – It breathed forth famine, swam in blood and rode on fire; and long, long after, the orphan’s cry, and the widow’s wail, continued to break the sad silence that ensued.”<sup>107</sup> The perpetuation of slavery, an institution built on the lie that some men are not created equal in their capacity for self-government, sullied the purity of the American experiment. If the success of America’s experiment in self-government relied on the approval of Providence, then slavery and alcoholism was the fall from grace.

In both political and moral affairs, the American people became more and more corrupted by the freedom that self-government brings. Freedom has many inherent

his faith in the political institutions of this nation when he relinquished the presidency for retirement. “In looking forward to the moment, which is intended to terminate the career of my public life, my feelings do not permit me to suspend the deep acknowledgement of that debt of ... gratitude which I owe to my beloved country, for the many honors it has conferred upon me.” (*Journals of the Continental Congress, vol. 25, 1774-1789*. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1922, p. 818.)

<sup>106</sup> Basler, p. 140.

<sup>107</sup> Basler, p. 140.

dangers. The free slaveholder, believing he is more capable than the slave to govern, begins to rule others. It is here where self-government becomes tyranny and a wholly American example of this could be found in the antebellum South. Even the kindest of masters, who welcomed in a new slave with open arms and sincere affection, tightened their grip as they became accustomed to the power they wielded over the black man. For example, one of Fredrick Douglass's mistresses, Mrs. Auld, embodied this tragic side effect that self-governance can have on the human mind. "She had never had a slave under her control previously to [Douglass], and prior to her marriage she had been dependent upon her own industry for a living."<sup>108</sup> Mrs. Auld saw nothing unmannerly with Douglass looking her directly in the eye, an act considered criminal at the time. Douglass described the kind, old lady with nothing but adoration. "Her face was made of heavenly smiles, and her voice of tranquil music."<sup>109</sup> However, that façade was viciously ripped away and revealed a woman as cruel and evil as any master.

But, alas! This kind heart had but a short time to remain such. *The fatal position of irresponsible power* was already in her hands, and soon commenced its infernal work. That cheerful eye, *under the influence of slavery*, soon became red with rage; that voice, made all of sweet accord, changed to one of harsh and horrid discord; and that angelic face gave place to that of a demon.<sup>110</sup>

*The fatal position of irresponsible power.* It was the irresponsible wielding of power that was the lynchpin of a political metamorphosis from gentle woman to cruel tyrant. The

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<sup>108</sup> Douglass, p. 35.

<sup>109</sup> Douglass, p. 35.

<sup>110</sup> Douglass, p. 35-36. Author's emphasis.

same goes for society as a whole. A politically unmoderated citizenry devolves into mob-rule, where policy is enacted by the strongest and not by the duly elected. This devolution of the populace was the root cause of the acts of lawlessness that became commonplace up and down the Mississippi. This unmoderated political tyranny, a disastrous consequence brought about by the obtaining of immense power, is "the price, the inevitable price, paid for by the blessings it bought."<sup>111</sup>

Now moral tyranny, unlike its political counterpart, is not the result of exaggerated confidence in one's own capacity to govern himself and others, like in the case of the slave holder. Rather, moral tyranny comes from a lack of self-government and a near total dependency on the rule of another. Drunkenness is the tragic result that comes after alcohol is consumed with no moderation or restraint. The demon of intemperance corrupts the most noble of people, if they are not capable of combating against the dangerous nature of alcohol when abused. Lincoln equates alcohol when abused to the Egyptian Angel of Death in the story of Exodus, commissioned to slay the first born of every family. "Far around as human breath has ever blown, he keeps our fathers, our brothers, our sons, and our friends prostrate in the chains of moral death."<sup>112</sup> When a man finds comfort in a glass of bourbon and is content with the drunken state he finds himself occupying; when he has no control over his faculties and, instead, feels some euphoric sensation of existential giddiness, he becomes willing to subject himself to the rule of the bottle more than the rule of himself.

The problems that slavery and drunkenness bring to the American experiment come from opposite sides of the political spectrum. Slavery and the slave master

<sup>111</sup> Basler, p. 140.

<sup>112</sup> Basler, p. 139.

represent one extreme, where one man or group of men believe themselves to be more capable of self-governing and, therefore, believe themselves to be suited for ruling over others. Drunkenness is the exact opposite of slavery and represents the other extreme. The drunkard is completely subject to the will of the bottle. He is, to put it bluntly, a slave. His reason is suppressed by his master, who holds him on a tight, short leash with no chance of freedom. Frederick Douglass often recounted a yearly ritual in which the slave masters allowed the slaves to take a break from work and to take a much-needed rest. “The days between Christmas and New Year’s day are allowed as holidays; and, accordingly, we were not required to perform any labor, more than to feed and take care of the stock.”<sup>113</sup> This was not done out of generosity or out of some philanthropic desire to see those men and women enjoy a few days of rest after working under tyrannical conditions. Rather, it was done with the goal to show the enslaved men and women that they are not worthy of being free. “For instance, the slaveholders not only like to see the slave drink of his own accord, but will adopt various plans to make him drunk.”<sup>114</sup> Games would be invented, bets would be placed on which slave would drink the most, and the men who toiled under the sun for the great majority of the year would drink, dance, and indulge in all of their vices. The American slave, under false pretense, confused drunkenness as freedom and, in doing so, became slaves to alcohol as they were to man. “So, when the holidays ended,” Douglass and his brethren “staggered up from the filth ... took a long breath, and marched to

the field – feeling, upon the whole, rather glad to go, from what [the] master had deceived us into a belief was freedom, back to the arms of slavery.”<sup>115</sup>

These two great problems Abraham Lincoln witnessed in America represented the two extremes of governance: tyrant and slave. Moderation does not exist at these opposite poles and Lincoln fully understood that. At the end of Temperance Address, Lincoln implicitly connects wrongs the reformers against alcohol – the temperance movement – and the reformers of the evils of slavery – the abolition movement – committed in their denunciation and condemnation. Troubled by the immoderation of the Garrisonian figures of the country who resembled the old generation of temperance reformers, Lincoln’s call for moderation was a plea directed at the American people to reject the radicalism that gripped the nation.<sup>116</sup> If these political and moral conundrums were the instruments that brought about the national sin, then it was Lincoln’s intent to bring about the nation’s salvation. In Lincoln’s well-regarded Peoria Address, one of the few speeches unquestionably in the pantheon of Lincolnian scholarship, he declared, “Our republican rope is soiled, and trailed in the dust. Let us re-purify it. Let us turn and wash it white, in the spirit, if not the blood of the Revolution... Let us re-adopt the Declaration of Independence, and with it, the practices, and policy, which harmonize with it.”<sup>117</sup> To re-purify the republican robe is to recommit the nation to its founding principles and Lincoln began this great task in his political career with his noble call for a moderated populace.

<sup>113</sup> Douglass, p. 75.

<sup>114</sup> Douglass, p. 77.

<sup>115</sup> Douglass, p. 77.

<sup>116</sup> In a global context, the Garrisonian’s and old generation reformers resembled the immoderation of the French Jacobins, who paved the way for Napoleon Bonaparte, a figure who Mr. Lincoln specifically

mentioned in his concluding paragraphs of the Lyceum Address. The idealist’s radical rejection of rule of law paves way for the figure which Lincoln warned would burn for distinction whether at “the expense of emancipating slaves, or enslaving freemen” (Basler, p. 83).

<sup>117</sup> Basler, p. 315.

Lincoln believed the most recent generation of temperance reformers, having a proper understanding of human nature, would be the ones to aide in breaking the chains of both the slave-master and the bottle of gin by appealing to man's reason. This reliance on reason will be the essential weapon in America's arsenal to become a more moderated society. "And what a noble ally this, to the cause of political freedom. With such an aid, its march cannot fail to be on and on, till every son of earth shall drink in rich fruition."<sup>118</sup> While previous generations of reformers failed to produce results, the new movement was different. Their emphasis on appealing to man's reason, however suppressed it might be, was key to bringing about a time where passions would not dictate the affairs of man or state. In this way, the Washingtonian Society was emulating its namesake and advocating for reason to prevail in all circumstances both political and moral.

Rather than advocating for complete abstention, however, Lincoln did remove himself from the ranks of the temperance movement and called on all people to emulate Washington's characteristic moderation. As previously stated, alcoholism is the complete subjugation of man to the will of alcohol and is "the *abuse* of a *very good* thing."<sup>119</sup> From the point of view of the Washingtonians, the act of temperance, on the other side of the spectrum, implies that the individual does not have enough confidence in himself to exercise a certain degree of restraint in consumption. Moderation is the sweet spot in the middle that both the temperate and the alcoholic should aspire towards. It is Lincoln's hope that the realignment of the American character will bring about an era where reason dictates the affairs of man and not bodily or political passions. America will

be blessed when "all appetites controlled, all passions subdued, all matters subjected, *mind*, all conquering *mind*, shall live and move the monarch of the world."<sup>120</sup> Admittedly, the rhetoric Lincoln used is quite theatrical when compared to his more stoic language elsewhere. However, the Temperance Address demonstrates an important lesson in tactfulness. In such a setting as the one in which Lincoln gave his remarks, the rhetoric must meet the enthusiasm of the audience to catch their attention, but that does not invalidate the truth that he spoke.

Lincoln's vision of a new world order dictated by reason was not merely utopian speculation. It was his view of a world that *could* be, should the American people dedicate themselves to the task of pursuing moderation. In the eyes of the Lincoln, the earnest and small steps made towards emancipating the slave and freeing the drunkard from their respective tyrants would help purify the republican robe and make us worthy of our political and moral salvation. This does not mean that Lincoln believed that all men would live moderately. To say so would suggest that Lincoln had an impractical understanding of human nature; but that is certainly not the case, as demonstrated over the course of this statesmanship thesis. Nor did Lincoln believe that only the slaves and drunkards should work towards reclaiming their ability to self-govern. The crusade for moderation is one that all people are asked to rally behind. Separating itself from all forms of government, America's survival relies on the willing engagement of its people in the political process. While slavery and drunkenness represent the two extremes that self-government can produce, they exist on the fringes while the majority of Americans live and work between these two ends. In the same way that Lincoln argued that the non-

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<sup>118</sup> Basler, p. 140.

<sup>119</sup> Basler, p. 135. Lincoln's emphasis.

<sup>120</sup> Basler, p. 140. Lincoln's emphasis.

drinker should sign a temperance pledge in a display of solidarity, so too should the American people all join together in the quest to bring about a free and just society. “To all the living everywhere, we cry, ‘come sound the moral resurrection trump, that these may rise and stand up, an exceeding great army.’”<sup>121</sup>

The American people should aim for the highest good possible. In recognizing that by their nature, men cannot achieve the perfect good, they nonetheless go farther in the quest to moderate themselves than they ever could have without that end to aspire towards. Lincoln believed that, if the United States finds political and moral tranquility as a result of cultivating characteristic moderation, they will serve as the birthplace and cradle of the revolution to emancipate peoples around the world.

### *The Birthplace and Cradle of Freedom*

The remaining question is what does Lincoln believe to be the final victory that can be obtained if the American people choose to moderate themselves? Combating the demons of intemperance and mob rule requires an acute understanding of human nature. Once this is done, man will be able to rise slowly from his station and reclaim his ability to self-govern. Reason is required for both types of moderation and because of this, one of the ends that can be achieved according to Lincoln is a “reign of reason” – where man does not make decisions or take action based on bodily passions alone. While the reign of reason is an important victory in the crusade for moderation, it is not the last. The reign of reason is just the penultimate step which leads to the fulfillment of what Lincoln called “the political and moral freedom of [the] species.” With the coronation of the mind as sovereign in the era predominantly

dictated by reason, Lincoln believed that both the slave and the drunkard will be emancipated from their lowly stations and rise to join the ranks of truly free people.

And when the victory shall be complete – when there shall be neither a slave nor a drunkard on the earth – how proud the title of that *Land*, which may truly claim to be the **birthplace** and **cradle** of both those revolutions, that shall have ended in that victory. How nobly distinguished that *People*, who shall have planted and nurtured to maturity, both the political and moral freedom of their species.<sup>122</sup>

Though Lincoln does not mention any country specifically, there can be no doubt that this mythological people and land that he speaks of is the United States. If the political and moral acts of penance which Lincoln articulated in the Temperance Address lead to a moderated citizenry, then the American people will be the ones to inspire the rest of the world to do the same. Not all Americans will become moderate but that does not mean that no one would be able to live a moderate life either. Lincoln had enough faith in people to believe that more than a few will acquire the characteristic moderation and had a competent enough understanding of human nature to not say that man will bring about some utopian world order. A simple majority, one large enough to combat tyranny in whatever form it may take, is needed to secure and protect a moderate society and, therefore, a free one.

It is not surprising that the birthplace of the political and moral revolutions would be in a regime like the United States. The nation’s founding fathers gave their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor in

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<sup>121</sup> Basler, p. 139.

<sup>122</sup> Basler, p. 140-141. Lincoln’s and author’s emphasis.

pursuit of the equality naturally ordained by God and the freedom which self-government secures. The Declaration of Independence served as the birth certificate to the political and moral revolutions which were conceived in the minds of men like Hamilton and Jefferson and birthed in the blood and triumph of the Revolution. These dogmas served as the nation's compass, navigating our ancestors through the construction of a government built on the understanding that the people are simultaneously crafting and obeying the law. No nation before the political revolution of 1776 even rivaled the revolutionary mindset that gave birth to the American experiment.

If America served as the conception and birthplace of these brethren in the campaign for freedom, then the same land would inevitably serve as the cradle as well. It is the job of a cradle to be the bed for an infant while he or she is growing in stature and intellectual capacity. Cradles protect the child as it develops from its most venerable state to one where it is able to begin to function independently. But these two revolutions can only reach adulthood in a place where it is safe to grow, where they are relatively free from the tyranny which the abuse or lack of self-governance can create. It was the generation of Washington, Madison, and Jefferson that gave birth to these great revolutions and it is the duty of all generations who follow to make sure that they grow to adulthood. At a time when Clay, Calhoun, and Webster walked the halls of Congress and Lincoln was a novice prairie lawyer, it appeared that the climate of the nation was not suitable for the revolutions to grow in maturity and that the freedom of the American people would slowly fade into memory. However, the Temperance Address is not a requiem but a rallying cry. Lincoln steadfastly believed in a future for the American people that was worthy of the liberty purchased through the blood and treasure of their fathers and protected through

passionate, if often reckless, debate and compromise.

Lincoln believed that moderation, cultivated through reason, enables our political institutions to govern *effectively* and encourages man to govern himself *productively*. Moderation of the individual is essential for a regime built on self-government to endure through the ages; it is a product of reflection and choice, not accident and force. The survival of the body politic rests on the citizen's ability to temper his passions. Lincoln believed that a moderate America would be the one to nurture and protect these two campaigns for freedom because a moderated populace would not desire to succumb to the vices they know would put the freedom of man in harm's way. If the American people would choose to moderate themselves in the ways that Lincoln advocated for, then the United States would embody what John Winthrop envisioned as the "shining city upon the hill." As that shining city upon the hill, the people of world would look to the United States to see not just whether *our* experiment in self-government could work, but if it could work for *them* as well. Should America work to emulate Washington's moderation and triumph over the tribulations inherent to a nation built on the sovereignty of the people, then the people of the world will come to desire the freedom that the American civilization possesses and work to claim it for themselves.

Much like an elaborate construction of upright dominos, awaiting the first to be knocked down in order to create a chain reaction, the political and moral revolutions which started in America will slowly spread across the world, emancipating not just the drunkards and the slaves, but all people. For the impoverished and the enslaved, the United States and its ability to protect the freedom of man will serve as the inspiration for them to "burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had

persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self-government.”<sup>123</sup> Much like the founding fathers to whom he is the rightful heir, Abraham Lincoln believed that in time mankind will come to share in the freedom the American civilization conceived and nurtured to maturity. This is the greatest victory that can be achieved if the American people are able to moderate themselves. Just as Lincoln argued that the American people should emulate Washington’s moderation, Lincoln believed the people of the world would come to emulate the American people - and the world would be all the better for it. “And when the victory shall be complete – when there shall be neither a slave nor a drunkard on the earth – how proud the title of that *Land*, which may truly claim to be the birthplace and cradle of both those revolutions, that shall have ended in that victory.”<sup>124</sup>

Each challenge the nation faces, whether it be from the threat of mob-rule, the problems of alcoholism, or a civil war, is a test as to whether a nation “conceived in liberty and dedicated to proposition that all men are created equal... can long endure.”<sup>125</sup> No matter how large or small the problem that faces the nation, whether political or moral by nature, our response – impassioned or rational – affects the survival of republicanism. When the American people fail to act rationally, when they fail to moderate their passions, they threaten to dirty our republican robe and prevent our political institutions from working to protect the rights incumbent to all men. But, when the American people emulate the moral character of Washington and allow reason to dictate the affairs of men and the body politic, we prove that “government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”<sup>126</sup> The resolve and success of the United States, combating political and moral

tyrants in whatever form they may take, will be the signal for those enslaved to rise above their tyrants in pursuit of a life blessed with liberty.

## CONCLUSION: Vindicating Temperance

The Temperance Address serves as Abraham Lincoln’s rational plea to the American people to moderate themselves at a moment in time when it seemed like the nation was committing political and moral suicide. It is a speech that, although an essential piece of Lincolnian scholarship, has not produced the thorough interpretation it deserves. While other speeches have been deemed worthy of the esteem and affection of scholars, the Temperance Address has been met with an intentional silence. Such a silence does as much to perpetuate the degradation of the Temperance Address as any scathing interpretation of it. Although it is foolish to suggest that any one person can compile a complete and definitive analysis to any of Lincoln’s speeches, it is important to make a concerted effort to explore the Temperance Address in order to have a more complete understanding of the political philosophy of Abraham Lincoln.

The thesis has argued that the Temperance Address is a necessary part of Lincolnian scholarship. However, *necessity* does not imply *greatness*. While the Temperance Address is an essential piece of Lincolnian scholarship, it does not match the somber poetry of his greatest achievements. The Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural are chapters in the American Gospel; speeches, debates, proclamations that tell the nation’s story, our trials and tribulations. They speak of the truths that make the United States favored among the

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<sup>123</sup> Peterson, p. 1516-1517.

<sup>124</sup> Basler, p. 140.

<sup>125</sup> Basler, p. 734.

<sup>126</sup> Basler, p. 734.

nations, and reflect upon what it means to be an American – either by birth or by choice. The Lincoln of 1842 was not as wise or as learned as the Lincoln of 1863 or 1865. Nonetheless, the Temperance Address speaks to great truths, informed by the greatest of western thinkers and articulated by a simple prairie lawyer whose name is now synonymous with greatness. His actions and his thoughts give people around the world reason to remember him by. It is the author's sincere hope that, upon reading this thesis, the reader will call to mind the Temperance Address when they think of Lincoln and count this speech among the many reasons to remember him.

In the speech, Lincoln analyzed both political and moral moderation as separate virtues, which serve as the first two arguments for the speech's importance. When calling for a politically moderated populace in Temperance, Lincoln continued the dialogue that he began in the Lyceum Address, regarding the necessity for cultivating a reverence for the laws. In doing so, in living a politically moderated life, Lincoln believed that the institutions of the United States will be able to execute their responsibility and protect the civil liberties of the American people. But the Temperance Address also brings in its own unique and singular contribution to Lincolnian studies, separate from the influence of any other speech, regarding his belief that reason as an important facet of human nature. Such knowledge is essential in the pursuit of moral moderation and reforming the drunkard and the slave owner. In doing so, Lincoln advocated a moderate life that neither completely indulges in the passions of the body nor completely abstains from them.

Ultimately, Lincoln analyzed both political and moral moderation as one singular virtue, which is embodied in the life of George Washington. Lincoln's rational plea to the American people to moderate

themselves underlines the importance of America's divine mission to inspire the people of the world to rise from tyranny and acquire the political and moral freedom incumbent to free people. With all three arguments taken into consideration, the Temperance Address is Abraham Lincoln's treatise on both political and moral moderation, the role which reason plays in their cultivation, and their necessity to the perpetuation of the American Republic. What makes Lincoln's words is their universal application across the ages, regardless of one's place in time or history. His remarks were true in that cold winter of 1842 and they are true today. Great minds speak to each other through the ages and across the oceans; just as Shakespeare and the American Founders influenced Lincoln, so too has Lincoln influenced the generations of politicians and thinkers who have come after him. Although it may be easier to express one's political opinions through violence and force when we disagree with one another, although it may be easier to live in the comfort of a bottle than to exercise a certain degree of self-governance, we cannot give into what Lincoln called the demons of intemperance.

The eyes of the world still look to America as that shining city upon the hill, even when we fall short of our mission from time to time. If the Temperance Address teaches us anything, it is that our willingness to moderate ourselves, to make mild our deeply imbedded passions, will be the most important step we can take to ensure the perpetuation of our institutions and the protection of our freedoms, proving once more that man is capable of governing himself; but it will also inspire those, who, from some far-off land under the control of prince or potentate, look to the United States with hope in their eyes, and, seeing our temple of liberty strong and battle-tested upon the hill, rise up to take their rightful place among the free peoples of the world.

## APPENDIX A

### *Summary of the Temperance Address*

While Chapter One does a proficient job at laying out the basic arguments that Lincoln rests the Temperance Address upon, it is a much more detailed speech than simply what was presented in the summary. Dr. Harry Jaffa, author of *Crisis of the House Divided: An Interpretation of the Issues in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates* (1959), presented a detailed analysis of the speech that does an exceptional job at laying out paragraph by paragraph the ebb and flow of Temperance. I have included the entirety of Dr. Jaffa's summary for the curious reader who wishes to explore the speech and its structure in greater detail. Numbers in the parenthesis correspond to the paragraphs of the text in the *Sangamo Journal*, March 25, 1852, and reprinted in Roy P. Basler's *Collected Works*, I, pp. 271-79 and the one volume *Speeches and Writings*, p. 131-141. The paragraphs are not numbered in the printed text.

- A. Present Success of the Temperance Address (1-18)
  - a. Celebration of Present Successes (1-2)
  - b. Causes of Present Successes: Contrast Between the Old and New Temperance Champions (3-18)
    - i. Want of Approachability of Old-School Champions: Wrong Men (3-4)
      - 1. Their Want of Approachability
        - a. Because of Supposed Want of Sympathy
        - b. Because of Supposed Want of Disinterestedness
      - 2. The Washingtonians Contrasting
        - a. Sympathy
        - b. Disinterestedness
    - ii. Unwisdom of Old-School Champions' Tactics: Wrong Measures (5-18)
      - 1. Unwisdom of Denunciation (5-16)
        - a. Its Impolicy (5-8)
          - i. Its Ineffectiveness
            - 1. Because Unsympathetic
            - 2. Because Necessarily Productive of Antagonism
          - ii. The Washingtonians Effectiveness
        - b. Its Injustice (9-16)
          - i. Drinking Sanctioned by Universal Public Opinion: Hence Not Unjust
            - 1. Evidence of This Opinion
            - 2. Interpretation of This Opinion
            - 3. Evaluation of This Opinion
          - ii. Its Denunciation Inhumane: Hence Unjust



- ii. The Moral Revolution
  - 1. Its Benefit: Superiority of Moral to Political Freedom
  - 2. Its Cost: “Widow’s Wail” Compared with “Universal Gladness”
- b. Consequences of the Two Revolutions: Universal Reign of Reason (28)
- c. Glory of the Two Revolutions (29-30)
  - i. For the Land That Will Be the Birthplace and Cradle of Both (29)
  - ii. For the Name of Washington (30)

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