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PROCEEDINGS OF A CALLED MEETING

OF

Ministers of all Religious Denominations

IN THE

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,

IN THE

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH ON THIRTEENTH STREET,

MONDAY, APRIL 17,

IN REFERENCE TO THE SORE BEREAVEMENT WHICH THE COUNTRY HAS
SUFFERED IN THE SUDDEN DECEASE OF OUR BELOVED
CHIEF MAGISTRATE,

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

WITH THE

REMARKS OF REV. DR. GURLEY,

ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

ANDREW JOHNSON,

AND THE

REPLY OF THE PRESIDENT.

WASHINGTON, D. C. :

McGILL & WITHEROW, PRINTERS AND STEREOTYPERS.

1865.

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MINUTES.

The Ministers of the different religious denominations in the District of Columbia convened in the First Baptist Church, on Thirteenth street, at 9 o'clock, A. M., April 17, 1865, in pursuance of a call of six of their number, which had been published in the daily papers, as follows :

To Clergymen of all Religious Denominations in the District of Columbia.

BELOVED BRETHREN : You are each and all respectfully requested to meet in the First Baptist Church, on 13th street, Rev. Dr. Gillette, at 9 o'clock, Monday morning, the 17th inst., to consider and take such action as may seem wise and proper with reference to the sore bereavement our country has suffered in the sudden decease of our beloved Chief Magistrate, Abraham Lincoln.

P. D. GURLEY,

Pastor of New York Ave. Presbyterian Church.

A. D. GILLETTE,

Pastor of First Baptist Church.

CHAS. H. HALL,

Rector of Epiphany Parish.

W. M. D. RYAN,

Foundry Methodist Episcopal Church.

J. G. BUTLER,

Pastor Lutheran Church.

WM. H. CHANNING,

Pastor of Unitarian Church.

The meeting having been called to order, the Rev. J. G. Butler, Pastor of the Lutheran Church, nominated, and, on his motion, the Rev. P. D. Gurley, D. D., Pastor of the New York Avenue

Presbyterian Church, was unanimously called to the Chair. After a few impressive remarks, he opened the meeting by a solemn invocation of the Divine blessing.

On motion, the Rev. C. H. Hall, D. D., was elected Secretary.

It was then

Resolved, That a Committee of one member from each of the religious denominations be appointed to draft and present to the meeting an appropriate Preamble and Resolutions, upon the subject for which the Clergy were convened.

On motion,

Resolved, That the Chairman of the Committee be first appointed.

Whereupon, on nomination, the Rev. Dr. Hall was elected Chairman of the Committee.

On nominations by several members, the following ministers were chosen as the Committee: Rev. W. B. Edwards, D. D., of the Methodist Church; Rev. A. D. Gillette, D. D., of the Baptist Church; Rev. Septimus Tustin, D. D., of the Presbyterian Church, O. S.; Rev. J. N. Coombs, of the Presbyterian Church, N. S.; Rev. Wm. F. Butler, of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; Rev. Daniel Bowers, Methodist Protestant Church; Rev. J. Geo. Butler, of the Lutheran Church; Rev. Wm. H. Channing, D. D., of the Unitarian Church; Rev. Jabez Fox, of the New Jerusalem Church.

While the Committee were in session, in the Pastor's study, the meeting engaged in religious exercises.

The Committee returned, and, by their Chairman, reported the following Preamble and Resolutions:

The life of the Chief Magistrate of the Nation has been taken by the hand of an assassin, without one circumstance to relieve the barbarity of the deed, or save it from the universal execration of the civilized world; in the hour of his respite, after unusual toils in the holiest labors of his

high position ; the efforts to re-establish peace and quietness in this distracted country ; to extend to all offenders against the Constitution and Laws the largest amnesty ; to hold out the most generous terms of reconciliation and concord, and to limit, as far as possible by human agencies, the suffering and miseries of this once happy and united people—a murder so remorseless and iniquitous, that pity for the misguided criminal is lost in detestation and abhorrence of his crime.

The sick room of the distinguished Statesman who co-operated with the President in all his plans for a restoration of this Union upon a sound and permanent basis, whose helpless condition at the time would have disarmed the rage of all ordinary malice, has been invaded by an atrocious murderer, whose fell thirst for blood would stop at no amount of violence, and the very excess of whose evil passions alone caused his brutal hand to strike wide of his mark ; and a peaceful home has been filled in a few short moments with a burden of sorrow and anguish too dreadful to contemplate with common control of reason.

A tragedy has been accomplished in each case which fills the land with mourning, draws again the gloomy pall over the signs of our national rejoicing, leads us to ask in trembling anxiety, *O Lord! how long?* and pollutes our city with blood which cries from the ground and enters into the ears of the Lord of Hosts. Had the victim in either case been an ordinary man, there would be reason enough for our expression of righteous indignation ; but when the lives of the chief men of the Nation have been assaulted with intentions so vile and iniquitous, of whose limit we can only form wild conjectures, we are called upon to speak out and unite in expressing the sentiments of all civilized, not to say Christian men : therefore,

Resolved, That, in our belief, the crime of murder, when committed against the person of the Chief Magistrate of a great nation, invades the person of God's anointed and defies the sovereignty of the Almighty, whose servant he is ; has received the severest condemnation of the sacred writers, and masses in one black epitome the sum of all the crimes against the whole people, thus reached in destroying their head—chosen once, and again in this instance, by the votes of a free nation—and leaves all ordinary blood-guiltiness lagging far behind it. The apostle teaches us, that "*the Powers that be are ordained of God.*" The President of the United States and the Secretary of State are such ordained Powers, whose persons and lives until now have ever been held sacred and inviolable by all men, good and evil. We express more in sorrow than in anger our instinctive detestation of the crime, and profound grief that the history of this free people and this once peaceful city has been stained by a page which exceeds in horror the attempted or successful murders of rulers in any nation of past or modern times. "*Vengeance belongeth unto*

the Lord!" but righteous judgment according to law is committed by Him to men. May He show His power in arresting the criminals in these assassinations, and purifying our land from the pollution of their guilt!

Resolved, That the Chief Magistrate of this nation, as a man and as our Ruler, deserved the sincere respect of all good and loyal citizens for his honesty and integrity of purpose, manifested in his unremitting endeavors to carry the Nation through its unexampled trials and perils; in his unfeigned, hearty zeal for the rights of all men and races committed to his trust by Almighty God and by the votes of his countrymen; for his mercy and leniency to all misguided and erring citizens; for his humble walk and conversation in his high office; for his unabated zeal in tempering the horrors of civil war with the condonations of executive clemency, and for his resolute maintenance of the majesty of the law, with the largest possible charity consistent with its sacred promptings. The erring and the guilty have lost a friendly heart, to which they could always appeal in their hour of anguish and despair. The country has lost a Head, which it trusted with generous impulse from its experience of his honesty and ability. We mourn a man who will henceforth be enshrined in the grateful memories of millions, as second to none of his predecessors in patriotism and philanthropy.

Resolved, That it becomes us, in this troubled hour, to recall our faith in the sovereign Providence of Almighty God in guiding the destiny of this great Nation. He has scourged us bitterly for our sins—in this sad calamity, most bitterly. We bow to His divine allotment, and confessing the sins which have deserved punishment, pray with one heart, that He, as He alone can do it, may bring light out of darkness, and good out of evil, and make the manifold forms of human suffering now darkening our land effectual to work out in us and our fellow-citizens a true conversion and amendment of life; that among us, fruits meet for repentance may be abundantly brought forth, and that the glory of His grace may be made known among all nations, now and to future generations.

Resolved, That as residents of the Capital, we record and proclaim our common judgment of reverence and esteem for the late Chief Magistrate, as a citizen among us, known to all men for his virtues, kind to all and easy to be entreated, ready of access to the humblest of his neighbors, affable and unassuming in his address, and bearing his high office in the Nation with an evident desire to use it for the good of all parties—even the unthankful and the unworthy. If his political enemies charge him with errors of the head, we shall search here in vain for those who will indict him for errors of the heart; or if there were any such, they were those that leaned to clemency and pity. Few men could have passed

through his trials during this civil war with so sincere and universal respect and affection from his fellow citizens. Few would have wrung the hearts of all who knew him by such an untimely fate!

Resolved, That we respectfully offer to the distinguished Statesman whose assassination was intended as the companion act and complement of this great crime, our deep sympathy, and the assurance of our prayers for his recovery, and that of the son who so bravely cast himself in the path of the destroyer; and for his family, that God would vouchsafe them the comforting strength which they need, and sustain them in this hour of their grief and anxiety.

Resolved, That we present to the widow and family of the late President of the United States our assurance of sympathy in their loss—our prayers for them, that the Father of us all would take them into His keeping, and heal the wounds which human affection can only deplore, but may not reach.

Resolved, That, as Ministers of religion of this District, we commend to the congregations under our charge the devout consideration of the dreadful calamity which has befallen us and them; that we also commend to their prayers the afflicted families which have been called to mourn.

Resolved, That as a mark of respect, we wear the usual badge of mourning upon the left arm for sixty days, and that we attend the funeral services in a body.

Resolved, That whilst, with a depth of sorrow which we have no words adequately to express, we deplore the fall of our late Chief Magistrate, we nevertheless rest in the sincere hope that in the acknowledged ability, unyielding integrity, and thoroughly tried patriotism of his successor, our afflicted and sorrowing countrymen will find a happy guaranty that the interests of the Republic will suffer no detriment by his accession to the Executive chair.

Resolved, That we, as a body representing the several religious denominations of Christians in the District, will lose no time in waiting upon our Chief Magistrate, Andrew Johnson, and tendering to him our warmest sympathies, our affectionate confidence, and our most earnest support, with the pledge of our constant prayers that his administration may be happy and prosperous, and that it may speedily secure the highest aspirations of our afflicted and bleeding country by the restoration of unity, peace, and universal freedom.

Resolved, That, in view of the weighty responsibility thus so suddenly devolved upon him, we commend to the devout prayers of all Christian people the President of the United States and all others in authority, that God would so replenish them with the grace of His Holy Spirit, that they may always incline to His will, and walk in His ways; that He would endue them plenteously with heavenly gifts, grant them in health and prosperity long to live, and finally, after this life, to attain everlasting joy and felicity, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C. H. HALL, *Chairman*,
 A. D. GILLETTE, *Secretary*,
 J. GEO. BUTLER,
 W. B. EDWARDS,
 J. N. COOMBS,
 W. H. CHANNING,
 DAN'L BOWERS,
 WM. F. BUTLER,
 JABEZ FOX,
 SEPTIMUS TUSTIN,
Committee.

C. B. MACKEE, *Presbyter.*
 ALFRED HOLMEAD, *Grace Church.*
 C. LEPLEY, *Lutheran.*
 W. M. D. RYAN, *Foundry M. E. Church.*
 T. B. McFALLS, *Assembly's Presbyterian Church.*
 T. R. HOWLETT, *Calvary Baptist Church.*
 J. H. C. BONTE, *Christ Church, (Episcopal,) Georgetown.*
 J. H. M. LEMON, *Union Chapel.*
 W. Y. BROWN, *Presbyterian, U. S. A.*
 J. T. WARD, *Ninth Street M. P. Church.*
 R. H. BALL, *Ninth Street M. P. Church.*
 GEO. V. LEECH, *Waugh M. E. Church.*
 JOB W. LAMBETH, *Fletcher M. E. Church.*
 W. B. EVANS, *Presbyterian, (N. S.)*
 H. N. SIPES, *East Washington M. E. Church.*
 ULYSSES WARD, *Ninth Street M. P. Church, Washington, D. C.*
 JAMES MITCHELL, *Minister of the M. E. Church.*
 WM. S. FORT, *Minister of the M. E. Church.*
 M. J. GONSALVUS, *Chaplain, U. S. A.*
 SAMUEL M. SHUTE, *Professor, Columbian College.*
 MAYBERRY GOHEEN, *Minister of McKendree Chapel.*
 W. B. MATCHETT, *Baptist.*
 OLIVER COX, *Potomac Mission.*
 JACOB HENN, *German Evangelical Missionary.*

WM. H. CAMPBELL, Presbyterian.
 O. P. PITCHER, Missionary, Y. M. C. Association.
 J. N. DAVIS, Pastor Gorsuch M. E. Church.
 J. EASTBURN BROWN, Episcopal, Georgetown.
 P. HALL SWEET, M. P. Church.
 JOHN CHESTER, Presbyterian.
 R. R. GURLEY, Secretary of the Colonization Society.
 ED. C. MERRICK, Local Elder M. E. Church.
 J. M. MUSE, City Missionary.
 B. B. EMORY, M. E. Church.
 J. L. HAYGHE, M. E. Church.
 M. A. TURNER, M. E. Church.
 B. H. NADAL, M. E. Church.
 JOS. B. STITT, M. E. Church.
 B. NEWTON BROWN, M. E. Church.
 W. B. EDWARDS, M. E. Church.
 W. W. WINCHESTER, Congregationalist.
 W. T. JOHNSON, Second Baptist Church.
 WM. F. BUTLER, John Wesley Church.
 JNO. LANAHAN, Presiding Elder, Virginia District.
 JAMES PECK, Pastor Asbury M. E. Church.
 E. H. GRAY, Pastor of E Street Baptist Church.
 JOHN A. WILLIAMS, Galbraith Chapel.
 WILLIAM HENRY CHANNING, Unitarian.
 J. B. JONES, Assistant Pastor, Congress Street Methodist Protestant
 Church, Georgetown, D. C.
 C. W. WALKER, Chaplain First Regiment N. H. H. A.
 J. N. COOMBS, Pastor of Western Presbyterian Church.
 DAN'L BOWERS, Pastor of Congress Street Methodist Protestant
 Church, Georgetown, D. C.
 JOHN DICKINSON, M. E. Church.
 C. W. PRITCHETT, Methodist Church.
 SAM'L D. FINCKEL, G. E. Church.
 J. R. DAVENPORT, officiating at St. John's Church.
 E. M. BUERGER, German Evangelical Lutheran Trinity Church.
 G. W. SAMSON, President Columbian College.
 C. C. MEADOR, Pastor of Island Baptist Church.
 DANIEL H. PARRISH, Pastor First Cong. Meth. Church.
 T. N. HASKELL, Presbyterian Church.
 R. J. KEELING, Trinity Parish.
 W. A. HARRIS, Episcopal.
 C. R. V. ROMONDT, Reformed Dutch Church.
 L. S. RUSSELL, St. John's, Georgetown, D. C.

Pending the discussion of these resolutions, the Rev. Dr. Tustin, offered two additional resolutions, and the Committee were allowed to retire, in order to make such verbal alterations as seemed proper to harmonize them with their report, and incorporate them immediately before the last Resolution, as originally offered.

On motion of Rev. Mr. Evans, it was

Resolved, That a Committee of six be appointed to wait upon the President of the United States, and inform him of the desire of this meeting to pay him a visit, and to ascertain at what hour it will be convenient for him to receive us.

The Committee of six was appointed by the Chairman, as follows: Rev. W. B. Evans, (chairman,) Rev. Drs. Tustin and Channing, and Rev. Messrs. Howlett, Brown, (Meth.,) and Holmead, and were allowed to retire upon this mission.

Resolved, That the Preamble and Resolutions of the Committee, as amended, be adopted and signed by those ministers who are present.

Those present proceeded to the clerk's desk and affixed their signatures.

On motion,

Resolved, That the ministers of the District who are absent from this meeting are invited to unite with us in signing these Resolutions.

Resolved, That the city papers be requested to publish the proceedings of this meeting, and that the Clerk be directed to furnish a copy for that purpose.

Resolved, That the proceedings of this meeting be printed in pamphlet form, and that the Rev. Drs. Gillette and Hall be a Committee to superintend the publication.

On motion of Rev. J. Lanahan,

Resolved, That the Chairman and Secretary of this meeting be and they are hereby appointed a Committee to communicate to the family of the late

President, and also to the Secretary of State, the proceedings of this meeting.

Resolved, That we meet at the New York Avenue Presbyterian church, at 11 o'clock, A. M., on Wednesday, April 19, and proceed thence in a body to attend the funeral services of the late Chief Magistrate.

The Committee of six here returned and reported by their chairman, Rev. Mr. Evans, that they had been favored with an interview with the President, and that it was his desire to see the members of this body at once, at his room in the Treasury Building; whereupon, on motion, it was resolved to adjourn after appropriate devotions.

Rev. Dr. Gillette, on the call of the Chairman, offered a solemn and appropriate prayer, and the meeting adjourned to visit the President of the United States.

After the members of the Convention had been severally introduced to the President, the Rev. Dr. Gurley, their Chairman, addressed him as follows:

MR. PRESIDENT: The persons now standing around you are Ministers of the Gospel of different religious denominations, residing in the District of Columbia. We have been in session in one of our Churches for several hours to-day, considering what utterance we ought to make, and what testimony we ought to bear, touching the sore and sudden bereavement which has come upon the Nation. Our meeting was large, solemn, and tearful; our proceedings were delightfully harmonious; and we unanimously and cordially adopted certain resolutions pertaining to our late lamented Chief Magistrate, and to you his successor in office, which the Secretary of our meeting will now read in your hearing.

Here the foregoing Resolutions were read by the Rev. Dr. Hall, and when the reading was finished, Dr. Gurley resumed his address, and said:

After the reading of these resolutions, I hardly need to add anything to what I have already said. These resolutions, Mr. President, convey to you

our feelings, the feelings of our every heart. As we carried your predecessor daily in the arms of our faith to God, so will we carry you to Him also, and pray for you without ceasing, that the same hand which guided him so wisely and so well, may guide you in like manner. As you enter upon the grave and responsible duties of the position you have so unexpectedly been called to fill, and as you continue in those duties, we shall remember you in our closets; we shall remember you before our family altars; we shall remember you in our social meetings for prayer and praise; we shall remember you in our sanctuaries, and in the presence of our congregations, upon each returning Sabbath, and the burden of our united petitions on your behalf will be, that the God of our fathers, and our God, will give you that wisdom "which is *first pure*, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." May that wisdom be your guide from the beginning to the end of your term of office, and, under its guidance, may your administration redound to the advancement of the cause of truth and justice, of law and order, of liberty and good government, of pure and undefiled religion, and may the day soon come, *and you live to see it*, when the nation shall emerge from its trials with augmented purity and vigor, and be re-established upon a foundation that never can be moved—the foundation of liberty and righteousness, of unity and peace.

After a pause, and in perfect silence of the interested group of nearly sixty ministers of all denominations, the President, evidently oppressed by his emotions, began somewhat slowly, in a low voice, which grew earnest as he proceeded, and reached every heart, nearly as follows:

GENTLEMEN: I feel overwhelmed by this occasion, and utterly incompetent to the task before me, of making a suitable reply to you: and it may be that silence and the deep feelings of my own heart are the best answer I can give you. I thank you for this visit and this expression of your sentiments. I feel deeply solemn in view of this whole scene, and in listening to the eloquent words which have been spoken and read to me. I feel overwhelmed by thoughts of the position in which I am so suddenly placed and the duties which have devolved upon me. But amid all this natural feeling, the assurance which you have been pleased to give me, that I shall have the countenance, the assistance, and the prayers of such a body as this is, is most gratifying to my heart. It is possible, it is natural, that you should desire to know something of the future administration of affairs, and I can only say to you, as I have said to others, that my course

in the past must be the guaranty of what I hope to do in the future. I call upon you to take notice, that I have entered upon my office with no manifesto—no proclamation, with no propositions of changes or new policy of my own. In entering on the performance of duties so important and responsible as those before me, I can only say to you, that the course of events must decide, as they arise, what shall be the measures best adapted to promote the good of the country. My whole life has been based on the profound belief, in which I have never wavered, that there is a great principle of right, which lies at the basis of all things. I have always trusted to that principle as the certain support of all who abide by it—the great principle of right, and justice, and truth. I shall trust to it, and guide the administration of public affairs in conformity to it. I should feel anxious for the future, but that I have an abiding confidence in the strength of that principle, *and in Him who founded it*. I thank you for the assurance which you have been pleased to offer me. I have heard the fervent words which you have uttered and read to me of your love for the great man who is gone, and I feel them all; your opinions of his mercy and clemency, and I respond to them heartily. The true point which is to be made by us is, where these must stop, when they shall be conformed to the rules of right and justice. It is the great question of the hour, and I shall try to administer the government in such a manner, that it shall deal out to all, with impartial hand, that which the merits of each demand. In my opinion the time has come when you and I must understand and must teach that *treason is a crime*, and not a mere difference of political opinions. I have listened with emotion to the language in which you have expressed so clearly your abhorrence of the crime which has deprived the nation of its Chief Magistrate and filled the land with mourning. You have characterized it justly, but it may not be too much to say it is *diabolical*—for in fact this deed was devilish. We mourn together to-day over the calamity that has fallen upon the country. I feel that our beloved country will pass through the troubles of the present. I say again that I put my trust in the great principle which underlies all our institutions, and believe that we shall come out of this struggle to a better and higher life. The government has not accomplished its mission—but under the benignant smiles of the Almighty it will yet fulfil it. The country will triumph in the end, and these great principles will be firmly established.

Again I cordially thank you for your presence on this occasion, and for the expression of your sympathies in this hour of the nation's peril. I trust that in confidence in the great principles of which I have spoken, and with your countenance and prayers, I shall be enabled to succeed in restoring peace and concord to this now distracted and unhappy country.

The individuals present responded to certain portions of his

remarks with a fervent amen, and at their conclusion again approached, and with each a word of encouragement and blessing took leave of the President, who seemed greatly cheered by the promised aid of the representatives of the religious bodies of the community, in the arduous labors to which he had been so suddenly and sadly called.

P. D. GURLEY, *Chairman.*

CHAS. H. HALL, *Secretary.*