

The Gettysburg Address, Annotated with Lincoln's July 4, 1861 Message to Congress

[6>Four score and seven years ago<6] our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the [11>proposition<11] [13>that<13] [8>all men are created equal<8].

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, [1>or any nation<1], [12>so conceived and so dedicated<12], [5>can long endure<5]. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here [10>gave their lives<10] that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate, we can not consecrate, we can not hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that [9>government<9] [3>of the people, by the people<3], for [7>the people<7], shall not [4>perish [2>from the earth<4]<2].

[1]

Universal aspect of the war

by peterstephens on September 2, 2013 at 1:30 a.m.

"And this issue embraces more than the fate of these United States. It represents to the whole family of man the question whether a constitutional republic or democracy — a government of the people by the same people — can or cannot maintain its territorial integrity against its own domestic foes." [255-256].

[2]

Universal aspect of the Civil War

by peterstephens on September 2, 2013 at 1:31 a.m.

"And this issue embraces more than the fate of these United States. It represents to the whole family of man the question whether a constitutional republic or democracy — a government of the people by the same people — can or cannot maintain its territorial integrity against its own domestic foes." [255-256].

[3]

Same language

by peterstephens on September 2, 2013 at 1:32 a.m.

"It represents to the whole family of man the question whether a constitutional republic or democracy — a government of the people by the same people — can or cannot maintain its territorial integrity against its own domestic foes." [255-256].

[4]

Same language

by peterstephens on September 2, 2013 at 1:33 a.m.

"It presents the question whether discontented individuals, too few in numbers to control administration according to organic law in any case, can always, upon the pretenses made in this case, or on any other pretenses, or arbitrarily without any pretense, break up their government, and thus practically put an end to free government upon the earth" [256]

[5]

The nature of republics

by peterstephens on September 2, 2013 at 1:35 a.m.

"It forces us to ask: 'Is there, in all republics, this inherent and fatal weakness?' 'Must a government, of necessity, be too strong for the liberties of its own people, or too weak to maintain its own existence?'" [256]

[6]

The Events of 1776 Show that "State Sovereignty" Is a Myth

by peterstephens on September 2, 2013 at 1:45 a.m.

"Our States have neither more nor less power than that reserved to them in the Union by the Constitution — no one of them ever having been a State out of the Union. The original ones passed into the Union even before they cast off their British colonial dependence; and the new ones each came into the Union directly from a condition of dependence, excepting Texas. And even Texas, in its temporary independence, was never designated a State. The new ones only took the designation of States on coming into the Union, while that name was first adopted for the old ones in and by the Declaration of Independence. Therein the 'United Colonies' were declared to be 'free and independent States'; but even then the object plainly was not to declare their independence of one another or of the Union, but directly the contrary, as their mutual pledge and their mutual action before, at the time, and afterward, abundantly show." [261]

[7]

The People's Army Could Be a Government

by peterstephens on September 2, 2013 at 1:52 a.m.

"But more than this, there are many single regiments whose members, one and another, possess full practical knowledge of all the arts, sciences, professions, and whatever else, whether useful or elegant, is known in the world; and there is scarcely one from which there could not be selected a President, a cabinet, a congress, and perhaps a court, abundantly competent to administer the government itself." [264]

[8]

In Contrast to the Confederacy's Founding Documents

by peterstephens on September 2, 2013 at 1:54 a.m.

"Our adversaries have adopted some declarations of independence in which, unlike the good old one, penned by Jefferson, they omit the words "all men are created equal." Why? They have adopted a temporary national constitution, in the preamble of which, unlike our good old one, signed by Washington, they omit "We, the People," and substitute, "We, the deputies of the sovereign and independent States." Why? Why this deliberate pressing out of view the rights of men and the authority of the people?" [264]

[9]

Government of and for the People

by peterstephens on September 2, 2013 at 1:58 a.m.

"This is essentially a people's contest. On the side of the Union it is a struggle for maintaining in the world that form and substance of government whose leading object is to elevate the condition of men — to lift artificial weights from all shoulders; to clear the paths of laudable pursuit for all; to afford all an unfettered start, and a fair chance in the race of life. Yielding to partial and temporary departures, from necessity, this is the leading object of the government for whose existence we contend." [264]

[10]

Great Honor of the Common Soldier

by peterstephens on September 2, 2013 at 2:00 a.m.

"Great honor is due to those officers who remained true, despite the example of their treacherous associates; but the greatest honor, and most important fact of all, is the unanimous firmness of the common soldiers and common sailors. To the last man, so far as known, they have successfully resisted the traitorous efforts of those whose commands, but an hour before, they obeyed as absolute law. This is the patriotic instinct of the plain people. They understand, without an argument, that the destroying of the government which was made by Washington means no good to them."

[11]

An Experiment - A Proposition

by peterstephens on September 2, 2013 at 2:01 a.m.

"Our popular government has often been called an experiment." [265]

[12]

We've Done Two Out of Three

by peterstephens on September 2, 2013 at 2:02 a.m.

"Two points in it our people have already settled — the successful establishing and the successful administering of it. One still remains — its successful maintenance against a formidable internal attempt to overthrow it." [265]

[13]

Equality Cause Means that Votes Count

by peterstephens on September 2, 2013 at 2:06 a.m.

Around the time leading up to the Civil War, popular sovereignty began to imply suffrage. One upshot of the equality clause was the lack of an appeal from an election. "It is now for them to demonstrate to the world that those who can fairly carry an election can also suppress a rebellion; that ballots are the rightful and peaceful successors of bullets; and that when ballots have fairly and constitutionally decided, there can be no successful appeal back to bullets; that there can be no successful appeal, except to ballots themselves, at succeeding elections." [265]