

Laden With Guilt, and Full of Fears

Isaac Watts (1674–1748)

Laden with guilt, and full of fears
I fly to thee, my Lord;
And not a glimpse of hope appears,
But in thy written Word.

The volume of my Father's grace
Does all my grief assuage;
Here I behold my Saviour's face
Almost in ev'ry page.

This is the field where hidden lies
The pearl of price unknown;
That merchant is divinely wise
Who makes that pearl his own.

Here consecrated water flows
To quench my thirst of sin;
Here the fair tree of knowledge grows,
Nor danger dwells therein.

This is the judge that ends the strife,
Where wit and reason fail;
My guide to everlasting life
Thro' all this gloomy vale.

O! may thy counsels, mighty God!
My roving feet command;
Nor I forsake the happy road,
That leads to thy right hand.



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www.centralseminary.edu | info@centralseminary.edu
900 Forestview Lane N, Plymouth, MN 55441 | 800.827.1043

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In the Nick of Time

Quick Reactions

Kevin T. Bauder

At the time I'm writing, we don't know much about the man accused of the assassinations in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota. People on the Right are pointing to the fact that he was one of Governor Tim Walz's appointees. People on the Left are claiming that he is a quintessential Christian nationalist. Everyone is trying to blame their political opponents for this assassination.

Bilgewater. Both sides sometimes indulge in overheated rhetoric, but assassinations of this sort are rare. The only person responsible for the Brooklyn Park assassinations and the related Champlin shootings is the shooter himself. And, of course, anyone who helped him plan and carry out the attacks.

A political assassination like this is not simply an attack upon an individual. It is not merely an attack upon a party or a political position. It is an attack upon the fundamental organizing principle of the American republic. It is an attack upon us all.

The American form of government is, as Abraham Lincoln said, "of the people, by the people, and for the people." Even our Constitution is a document of "we the people." We all have an equal voice in electing representatives. They in turn are supposed to represent all their constituents, even those who do not vote for them.

We have a mechanism for removing representatives from office. That mechanism is called an election. If we dislike a representative's policies, then we can vote for a different one. If our candidates lose the election, we know that the winners received a majority of the votes. Even if we did not vote for them, they are *our* representatives.

Not incidentally, every governmental official occupies public office by ordination of God (Rom 13:1–7). We are obligated to pay them what we owe: taxes, custom, fear, and honor. If Paul could write these words while Nero was the emperor, then we can apply them to any person who fills a public office.

Furthermore, we are free to campaign for alternative candidates. We are free to argue and persuade. Unlike Canada and many European countries, the American system prizes freedom of speech. This freedom includes the right

to disagree publicly, loudly, and frequently. Even hate speech is protected (*Matal v. Tam*, 2017), though no Christian should engage in it (Col 4:5–6). We can never be forbidden to register our disagreements with any elected official. We can never be muzzled from expressing our disagreement with the policies that our officials support. We can even pool our money to hire people to advertise our ideas and candidates (*Citizens United v. FEC*, 2010).

Like all systems, the American system can be undermined or subverted. Subversion can occur through voter fraud, voter suppression, and voter intimidation. It can occur when rioters try to intimidate elected officials. It can also occur when politically motivated prosecutors try candidates or public officials for made-up crimes in kangaroo courts. But the very worst way in which an election can be subverted is by assassination.

We could argue the merits of assassination as a weapon of war. We could argue its morality under a repressive regime (was Bonhöffer wrong to plot to assassinate Hitler?). But we are not at war. Minnesota is not a dictatorship. Legislators in Minnesota are lawfully elected to represent the people, just as they are in all fifty states, and just as representatives are in Congress.

Assassination of a duly-elected representative uses violence to overthrow the will of the people. It is an act of anarchy. It is not just lawless. It strikes at the very foundations of lawful order. It is terrorism, treason, and insurrection. Such words are too often bandied about in heated political disputes, but they are the proper words to use for assassins. Assassination is the most insidious crime that can be committed against the government of a free people.

If ever there is a time for the Left and the Right to close ranks, this is it. A terrorist thwarted the will of the electorate by killing a lawfully chosen candidate. This assassination is not an attack upon one political position. It is an attack upon all of us.

I don't care if the assassin is a Leftist, a Centrist, or a Right-winger. I don't care if he is an Anarchist, a Muslim, or a Pastafarian. I don't care about his race, gender identity, economic status, or educational level. If he professes to be a Christian or a conservative, that only makes the crime worse. Let him be prosecuted in a court of law. Let him be tried by a jury of his peers. And when he is found guilty, let him bear the full penalty of the law.

Contra Saul Alinsky, this crisis is not a thing to take advantage of. It is not a time to gain political capital. It is a crime against all of us, regardless of where we fall on the political spectrum. That crime must be addressed decisively, and the message must be clear. Americans will not allow assassins to disrupt our republic.

This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.

