

History 225

Source: Royster, Destructive War

Lincoln's Second Inaugural is the best summary of the war's meaning.

Lincoln view reflects what the public must have been thinking by the thired year of this war. That reason could b]not explain the level of the violence. If so much killing could be explained it must be God's punishment for 250 years of slavery.

God must be quiding the war. *(A Great Search for 1861 - Please to restore the States quo, etc.)*

Lincoln stetches a condition of bewilderment: "neither party expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration, which it has already attained. Neither anticiapted that the cause of the conflict migh cease with, or evenb before, the conflict itself should cease.

Americans had bumbled into this war without knowing or antici-
pating the causes or consequences of their own actions.
The war had taken on a momentum of its own and was no longer
under the control--or the illusion of control--of those who
assumed to direct the course of this fiery struggle. Lncoln
was not ready to predict when it would end. he expected Northern
victory, but he suggests the war might yet go on for the sole
purpose of confounding and punishing the people of both sections.

To avoid claiming or infering that the war had no moral meaning
because it was no longer under the control of the men who
thought they prosecuted it, Lincoln resorts to cosmic design.
By implying that the war was in God's hands; influenced only
by His design, Lincoln could reconcile its contradictions,
explain its surprises, and validate its bloodshed as the workings
of some cosmic logic or diveinely weighed justice whose clarity
and consistency were inaccessible to human minds. There was
no other way to believe that what happened made sense.

Note: By 1864 the war had become a Holy Cause.