

“In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war.

The government will not assail you.

You can have no conflict, without being yourselves the aggressors.

You have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the government,

while I shall have the most solemn one to ‘preserve, protect and defend’ it.”

—Abraham Lincoln, from the First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1861