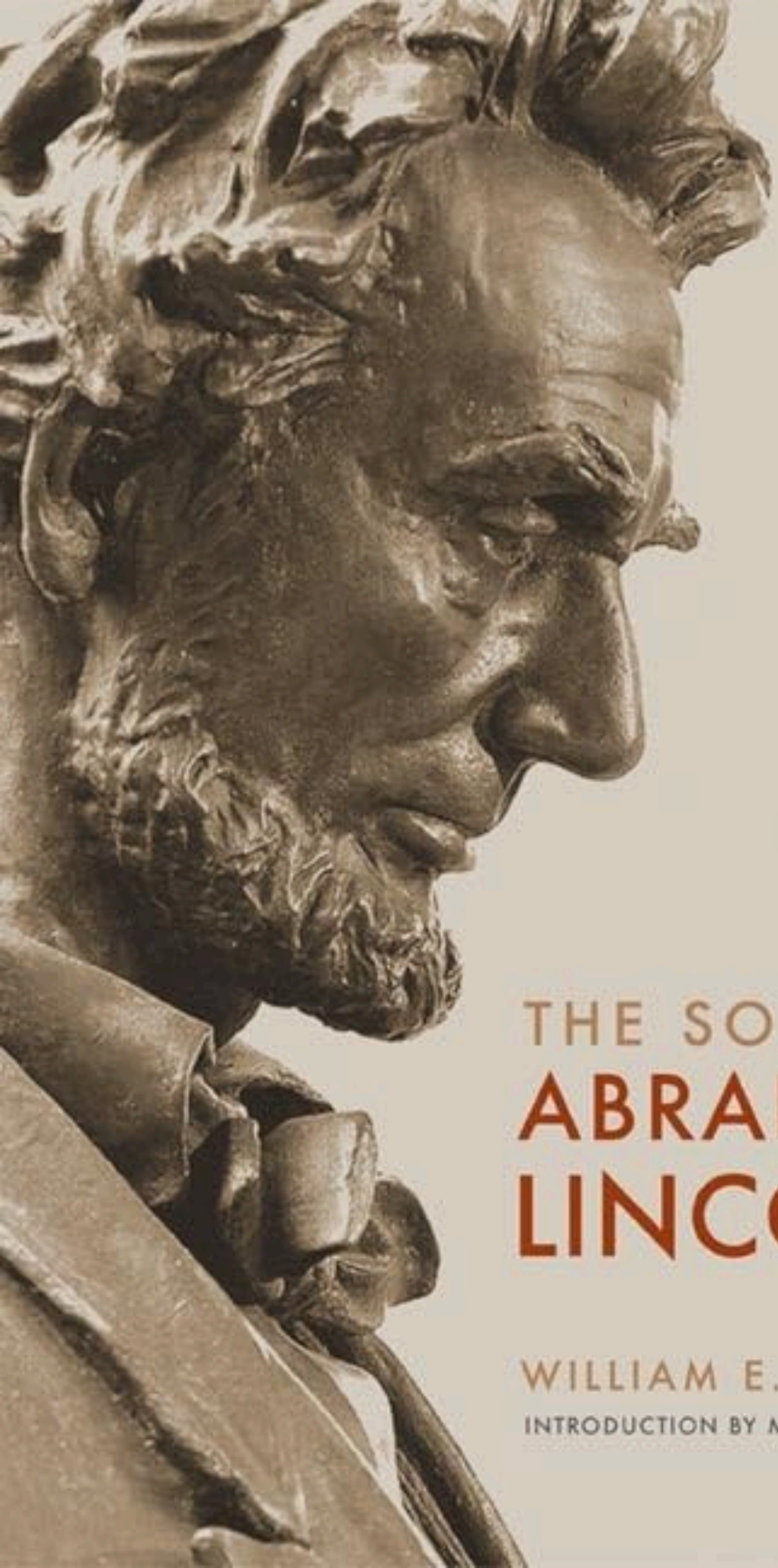


THE SOUL OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

WILLIAM E. BARTON

INTRODUCTION BY MICHAEL NELSON

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THE SOUL OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN ***

THE SOUL OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

BY

WILLIAM E. BARTON

AUTHOR OF "A HERO IN HOMESPUN,"
"THE PRAIRIE SCHOONER," "PINE KNOT,"
ETC.



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TO MY FOUR SONS
BRUCE, CHARLES, FREDERICK, ROBERT
AND MY SON-IN-LAW, CLYDE

PREFACE

THE author is aware that he is dipping his net into a stream already darkened by too much ink. The fact that there are so many books on the religion of Abraham Lincoln is a chief reason why there should be one more. Books on this subject are largely polemic works which followed the publication of Holland's biography in 1865, and multiplied in the controversies growing out of that and the Lamon and Herndon biographies in 1872 and 1889 respectively. Within that period and until the death of Mr. Herndon in 1892 and the publication of his revised biography of Lincoln in 1893, there was little opportunity for a work on this subject that was not distinctively controversial. The time has come for a more dispassionate view. Of the large number of other books dealing with this topic, nearly or quite all had their origin in patriotic or religious addresses, which, meeting with favor when orally delivered, were more or less superficially revised and printed, in most instances for audiences not greatly larger than those that heard them spoken. Many of these are excellent little books, though making no pretense of original and thorough investigation.

Of larger and more comprehensive works there are a few, but they do not attempt the difficult and necessary task of critical analysis.

So much has been said, and much of it with such intensity of feeling, on the subject of Lincoln's religion, that a number of the more important

biographies, including the great work of Nicolay and Hay, say as little on the subject as possible.

The author of this volume brings no sweeping criticism against those who have preceded him in the same field. He has eagerly sought out the books and speeches of all such within his reach, and is indebted to many of them for valuable suggestions. A Bibliography at the end of this volume contains a list of those to whom the author knows himself to be chiefly indebted, but his obligation goes much farther than he can hope to acknowledge in print. With all due regard for these earlier authors, the present writer justifies himself in the publication of this volume by the following considerations, which seems to him to differ in important respects from earlier works in the same field:

(1) He has made an effort to provide an adequate historical background for the study of the religious life of Abraham Lincoln in the successive periods of his life; and without immediately going too deeply into the material of the main subject, to relate the man to his environment. In this the author has been aided not only by books and interviews with men who knew Lincoln, but by some years of personal experience in communities where the social, educational, and religious conditions were in all essential respects similar to those in which Mr. Lincoln lived during two important epochs of his career. The author was not born in this environment, but he spent seven years of his youth and young manhood as a teacher and preacher in a region which give him somewhat exceptional opportunities for a discriminating judgment.

(2) The author has assembled what is, so far as he knows, all the essential evidence that has appeared

in print concerning the religious life and opinions of Mr. Lincoln, a larger body, as he believes, than any previous writer has compiled. He has added to this all evidence available to him from written and personal testimony.

He has subjected this evidence to a critical analysis, in an effort to determine the degree of credibility with which its several portions may reasonably be received. The author is not unaware that this is the most disputable, as it is the most difficult part of his task, and, as he believes, the most valuable part of it. Unless some such analysis is made, the evidence resolves itself into chaos.

(3) Several entirely new avenues of investigation have been opened and lines of evidence adduced which find no place in any previous book on Mr. Lincoln's religious life, and very scant reference, and that without investigation, in one or two of the biographies.

(4) The book also contains a constructive argument, setting forth the conviction to which the author has come with regard to the faith of Abraham Lincoln.

It is entirely possible that some readers will find themselves in essential agreement with the author in the earlier parts of the book, but will dissent in whole or in part from his own inferences. Whether the reader agrees or disagrees with the author in his conclusions, he will find in this book some material not elsewhere available for the formation of an independent judgment. Nevertheless the author counts himself justified not only in adducing the evidence but in stating frankly the conclusion which to his mind this evidence supports.

This book treats of the religion of Abraham Lincoln;

but it does not consider his religion as wholly expressed in his theological opinions. Important as it is that a man should think correctly on all subjects, and especially on a subject of such transcendent value, religion is more than a matter of opinion. We cannot adequately consider religion apart from life. Abraham Lincoln's life was an evolution, and so was his religion. In a way which this volume will seek to set forth, Lincoln was himself a believer in evolution, and his life and religion were in accord with this process as he held it.

This book is, therefore, more than an essay on the religion of Lincoln, unless religion be understood as inclusive of all that is normal in life. It deals, therefore, with the life, as well as with the opinions, of Lincoln; and it considers both life and opinion as in process of development in each of the successive stages of his career.

In this respect the present book may claim some distinctive place in the literature of this subject. Other books have drawn sharp contrasts between the supposed religious opinions of Lincoln's youth and those which he is believed to have cherished later. This book undertakes what may be termed a study of the evolution of the spiritual life of Abraham Lincoln. The author is not aware that this has been done before in quite this way.

The author acknowledges his obligations to many friends for their assistance in the preparation of this volume. Mr. Jesse W. Weik, of Greencastle, Indiana, associate of Mr. Herndon in the preparation of his Life of Lincoln, and owner of the Herndon manuscripts, has been generous to me. Mrs. Clark E. Carr, of Galesburg, Illinois, widow of my honored friend, and the friend of Lincoln, Colonel Carr,

author of "Lincoln at Gettysburg," has placed at my disposal all her husband's books and papers. Mr. Judd Stewart, of New York City, owner of one of the largest collections of Lincolniana, has assisted me. President John W. Cook of the Northern Illinois State Normal School has suggested important lines of research. Mr. John E. Burton, of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, whose collection of Lincoln books was once the largest in America, has sold me some of his chief treasures, and imparted to me much of the fruit of his experience. Mr. O. H. Oldroyd, of Washington, owner of the famous Lincoln Collection, and custodian of the house where Lincoln died, has, on two visits, placed all that he has within my reach. To these, and to a considerable number of men and women who knew Lincoln while he was yet living, and to many others whom I cannot name, my thanks are due.

I regret that one great collection, consisting, however, more largely of relics than of manuscripts, is so largely packed away that it has not been of much use to me. Mr. Charles F. Gunther of Chicago has, however, produced for me such Lincoln material as seemed to him to bear upon my quest, and I acknowledge his courtesy.

Mr. Oliver P. Barrett of Chicago has given me great joy in the examination of his fine collection of Lincoln manuscripts.

I have spent a few pleasant and profitable hours in the collection of Honorable Daniel Fish, the noted Lincoln bibliographer, of Minneapolis, and thank him for his friendly interest in this undertaking.

Among libraries, my largest debt is to those of the Chicago Historical Society, the Illinois State Historical Society at Springfield, and the Library of

Congress in Washington. In each of these I have had not only unrestricted access to the whole Lincoln material possessed by them, but the most generous and courteous assistance. I have examined every rare Lincoln book, and many manuscripts, in these three collections. I have had occasion also to use the Chicago Public Library, the Newberry Library, and the Library of the University of Chicago, as well as those of Chicago Theological Seminary and McCormick Theological Seminary. In certain important local matters, I have been assisted by the libraries of Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois, Illinois College, Jacksonville, Illinois, the Public Library of Peoria, Illinois, and the library of Transylvania University at Lexington, Kentucky. I also visited the Public Library of Louisville, with its historical collections, but most that I found there I had already consulted elsewhere. The New York Public Library and the Library of Columbia University supplemented my research at a few important points. The Oak Park Public Library has been constantly at my service. The Library of Berea College, Kentucky, has given me very valuable assistance in finding for me a large amount of periodical literature bearing on my study. The five great Boston libraries would have yielded me much had I come to them earlier. While the book was undergoing revision, I visited the Athenaeum, the Massachusetts State, the Boston Public, the Massachusetts Historical, and the Harvard University libraries. It was gratifying to discover that even in the last named of these, enriched as it is with the collections of Charles Sumner, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and the Lincoln collection of my friend Alonzo Rothschild, author of "Lincoln, Master of Men," there was practically nothing relating to this subject which I had not already seen

and examined. In the Massachusetts Historical Library, however, I discovered some manuscripts, and that quite unexpectedly, which afford me much aid in a collateral study.

In addition to the foregoing, I have my own Lincoln library, which, while a working collection rather than one of incunabula, and modest in size as compared with some that I have used, is still not small. The Bibliography at the end of the volume is virtually a catalogue of my own Lincoln books.

Claims of completeness are dangerous, and I make none. But I have been diligent in pursuit of all probable sources of knowledge of this subject, and I do not now know where to look for any other book of manuscript that would greatly alter or add to the material which this book contains. I am glad, therefore, at this stage, to share the fruits of my investigations with the reader.

W. E. B.

THE FIRST CHURCH STUDY
OAK PARK, ILLINOIS

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PART I: A STUDY OF RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENTS

CHAPTER I

THE CONFLICT OF TESTIMONY

OF no other American have so many biographies been written as of Abraham Lincoln. No other question concerning his life has evoked more interest than that of his religious faith and experience. What Abraham Lincoln believed has been told by many who knew him and whose varied relations to him during his lifetime rendered it not unreasonable to suppose that they could give some assured answer to the question of his belief. The answers are not only varied, but hopelessly contradictory. It is stated on apparently good authority that in his young manhood he read Volney's *Ruins* and Paine's *Age of Reason*, and it is affirmed that he accepted their conclusions, and himself wrote what might have been a book or pamphlet denying the essential doctrines of the Christian faith as he understood them. Friends of his who knew him well enough to forbid the throwing of their testimony out of court have affirmed that he continued to hold these convictions; and that, while he became more cautious in the matter of their expression, he carried

them through life and that they never underwent any radical change. On the other hand, there are declarations, made by those who also knew Lincoln well, that these views became modified essentially, and that Lincoln accepted practically the whole content of orthodox Christian theology as it was then understood; that he observed daily family worship in his home; that he carried a Bible habitually upon his person; and that he was in short in every essential a professed Christian, though never a member of a Christian church.

There is more than a conflict of testimony; there is positive chaos. Every recent biographer has felt the inherent difficulties involved in it. One or two of them have passed it over with practically no mention; others have become fierce partisans of the one extreme or the other.

Besides the formal biographies, a literature of this special topic has grown up. Entire books and many pamphlets and magazine articles have been written on this one question. The Chicago Historical Society and the Chicago Public Library have each devoted a principal division in the Lincoln material to the literature relating to his religion. It has been the writer's privilege to examine in both these libraries and in several others the whole known body of literature of the subject.

In this investigation the writer came face to face with utterly contradictory testimony from men who had known Abraham Lincoln intimately.

Of him Mr. Herndon, for twenty years his law partner, said:

> "As to Mr. Lincoln's religious views, he was, in short, an infidel.... Mr.

> Lincoln told me a thousand times that he did not believe the Bible was the revelation of God as the Christian world contends."—LAMON: *Life of Lincoln*, p. 489.

The direct antithesis of this statement is found in a narrative of Hon. Newton Bateman, who knew Mr. Lincoln from 1842 until Mr. Lincoln's death, and whose office was in the State House at Springfield next-door to that which, for a period of eight months from the time of his nomination till his departure for his inauguration, was occupied by Mr. Lincoln. He affirmed (or at least was so quoted by Holland) that Mr. Lincoln said to him:

> "I know there is a God, and that He hates injustice and slavery. I see the storm coming, and I know that His hand is in it. If He has a place and work for me—and I think He has—I believe I am ready. I am nothing, but truth is everything. I know I am right because I know that liberty is right, for Christ teaches it, and Christ is God."—J. G. HOLLAND: *Life of Lincoln*, p. 237.

Popular oratory has carried even farther these two extremes of irreconcilable contradiction. On the one hand are to be found scurrilous publications, shockingly offensive against all good taste, declaring Lincoln to have been an atheist, a mocker, a hypocrite, a man of unclean mind, and a violator in his speech of all canons of decency. We will not quote from any of these at present; but of the length

to which the other extreme can go, has gone, and continues to go, let the following incident, gleaned from a recent English book, serve as an illustration:

> "In the year 1861 the Southern States of America were filled with slaves and slaveholders. It was proposed to make Abraham Lincoln president. But he had resolved that if he came to that position of power he would do all he could to wipe away the awful scourge from the page of his nation's history. A rebellion soon became imminent, and it was expected that in his inaugural address much would be said respecting it. The time came. The Senate House was packed with people; before him was gathered the business skill and the intellectual power of the States. With one son lying dead in the White House, whom he loved with a fond father's affection; another little boy on the borders of eternity; with his nation's eternal disgrace or everlasting honor resting upon his speech, he speaks distinctly, forcefully, and without fear. Friend and foe marvel at his collected movements. They know of the momentous issues which hang on his address. They know the domestic trials that oppress his heart. But they do not know that, before leaving home that morning, the President had taken down the

> family Bible and conducted their home worship as usual, and then had asked to be left alone. The family withdrawing, they heard his tremulous voice raised in pleadings with God, that He whose shoulder sustains the government of worlds would guide him and overrule his speech for His own glory. Here was the power of this man's strength."—G. H. MORGAN: *Modern Knights-Errant*, p. 104; quoted in Hastings' *Great Texts of the Bible*, volume on "Isaiah," pp. 237-38.

This incident is now an integral part of the best and most recent homiletic work in the English language, and will be used in thousands of sermons and addresses. It is a story that carries its own refutation in almost every line. Mr. Lincoln had no son either sick or dead and lying in the White House or anywhere else at the time of his first inaugural, nor had he as yet entered the White House; and the hours of that day are fairly well accounted for; but this and similar incidents illustrate the length to which the oratorical imagination may carry a speaker either in the pulpit or on the platform, and not only be preserved in books but pass the supposedly critical eye of a careful compiler of material for sermons and lectures.

If another book is justified, it should be one that does more than compile that part of the evidence which appears to support a particular theory. The compilation should be as nearly complete as is humanely possible. But it must do more than plunge the reader into this swamp of conflicting testimony.

It must somehow seek to evaluate the evidence and present a reasonable conclusion.

Moreover, in the judgment of the present writer, religion is more than opinion, and cannot be considered as a detachable entity. Lincoln's religion was more than his belief, his conjecture, his logical conclusion concerning particular doctrines. It can only be properly appraised in connection with his life. While, therefore, the writer does not now undertake a complete biography of Lincoln, though cherishing some hope that he may eventually write a book of that character, this present work endeavors to study the religion of Lincoln not in detachment, but as part and parcel of his life.

A word may be said concerning the author's point of view and the experience which lies behind it. In his early manhood he had an experience of several years which he considers of value as affording a background for the interpretation of the Lincoln material. For several years the author taught school and afterward preached in the mountain region of Kentucky and Tennessee amid social conditions essentially parallel to those in which Mr. Lincoln was born and amid which he spent his manhood up to the time of his going to Washington. The same kind of preaching that Lincoln heard, not only in Kentucky but in the backwoods of Indiana and the pioneer villages of central and southern Illinois, the present author heard in his own young manhood as a teacher in district schools far back beyond the sound of the locomotive's whistle or the inroads of modern civilization. How that kind of preaching affected the inquiring mind of the young Lincoln, the author is sure he knows better than most of Lincoln's biographers have known. The fierce theological

controversies that waged between the old-time Baptists and the itinerant Methodists, together with the emphatic dogmatism of the Southern type of Presbyterianism as it was held and preached in the Kentucky mountains forty years ago and in southern Illinois and Indiana eighty years ago are part of the vivid memory of the present writer. A young man who refused to accept this kind of teaching might be charged with being an infidel, and might easily suppose himself to be one; but whether that would be a just or fair classification depends upon conditions which some of the controversialists appear not to have known or to have been capable of appreciating through lack of experience of their own.

This book attempts, therefore, to be a digest of all the available evidence concerning the religious faith of Abraham Lincoln. It undertakes also to weigh that evidence and to pass judgment, the author's own judgment, concerning it. If the reader's judgment agrees with the author's, the author will be glad; but if not at least the facts are here set forth in their full essential content.

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CHAPTER II

WHY THE BIOGRAPHIES DIFFER

THE many biographies of Abraham Lincoln differ widely in their estimate of his religious opinions and life, partly because the biographers approach the subject from widely differing angles, and some of them are seeking in advance the establishment of particular conclusions. But apart from that personal bias, from which no author can claim to be wholly free, the biographical study of Abraham Lincoln was itself an evolution whose main outlines and processes it will be profitable briefly to consider.

The first printed biographies of Mr. Lincoln appeared in 1860. They were the familiar campaign biography, such as is issued for every candidate for the Presidency. The first man who approached Mr. Lincoln with a proposal to write his Life was J. L. Scripps of the Chicago *Tribune*. Mr. Lincoln deprecated the idea of writing any biography.

> "Why, Scripps, [said he] it is a great piece of folly to attempt to make anything out of me or my early life. It can all be condensed into a single sentence, and that sentence you will find in Grey's 'Elegy':
>
> '*The short and simple annals of the poor.*'
>
> That's my life, and that's all you or anyone else can make out of it."—

HERNDON, I, 2.

Lincoln felt the meagerness of his biographical material, but the biographers succeeded in making books about him, Scripps wrote his booklet, and it appeared in thirty-two closely printed double-column pages, and sold at twenty-five cents. It is now excessively rare. Lincoln read the proof and approved it. The "Wigwam" Life of Lincoln appeared simultaneously with the Scripps booklet, and it is not quite certain which of the two emerged first from the press. It contained 117 pages, of which the last seven were devoted to Hannibal Hamlin, Republican candidate for Vice-President. This also had a wide sale, and is now very rare. That Lincoln did not read the proofs of this book is evidenced by the name "Abram" instead of "Abraham" on its title page and throughout the book. It relates that "when he was six years old, his father died, leaving a widow and several children, poor and almost friendless"; and in other respects shows that Lincoln did not furnish the data of it, and also indicates how meager was the biographical material at hand outside the little sketch which Lincoln prepared for Scripps.

Another pamphlet, containing 216 pages, was "The Authentic Edition" by J. H. Barrett, and still another, the "Authorized" edition by D. W. Bartlett, which extended to 354 pages and was bound in cloth. Perhaps the best of these campaign biographies of 1860 was that written by William Dean Howells, then a young man and unknown to fame. Apparently Lincoln furnished to each of these writers—except the Wigwam edition—essentially the same material which he had given to Scripps, or else they borrowed from Scripps, with permission, and to this extent they were "authorized" or "authentic." But there is no

indication that Lincoln read any of them except that of Scripps. Even this must have surprised him when he beheld how his little sketch could be spread out over as many as thirty-two pages.

The campaign of 1864 brought out a new crop of campaign biographies, and these used essentially the same material up to 1860, and found their new matter in the history of the Civil War up to the date of their publication.

This campaign material still stood in type or stereotyped pages when Lincoln was killed, and was hastily used again. The author, who owns all the books cited above, has also others which came from the press in May or June of 1865, whose main part was taken over bodily from the campaign biographies of 1864 and speaks of Lincoln as still living, while the back part is made up of material concerning the assassination, the funeral, and the trial of the conspirators. These called themselves "Complete" biographies, but they were merely revamped campaign booklets of 1864 with appended matter and virtually no revision.

These works represent the first stage of the attempt to make books out of the life of Abraham Lincoln. The outline of the life itself is meager in all of them, and they are well padded with campaign speeches; and the last of them, with full and interesting details of the funeral services of Lincoln, the death of Booth, and other matter lifted from the newspapers of the period.

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The second epoch began with the publication of the Life of Abraham Lincoln by John G. Holland in 1865. It was by all odds the best of the books that

undertook within a few years after his death to tell the story of the life of Lincoln, with some estimate of his place in history. It is also the book which began the controversy concerning Lincoln's religion.

—

The third period was introduced by the biography of Abraham Lincoln by Ward Hill Lamon, which was issued in 1872. It was based upon manuscripts that had been collected by William H. Herndon, who was supposed to have had a considerable share in the work of its preparation. Herndon emphatically denied writing any part of it, and said in a letter to Mr. Horace White that it was written for Lamon by Chauncey F. Black, son of J. S. Black, a member of Buchanan's cabinet and a political enemy of Lincoln (Newton: *Lincoln and Herndon*, p. 307). This valuable but unwisely written book, containing many things offensive to good taste, occasioned much controversy for its stark realism and what seemed to many of Lincoln's friends misrepresentations. Some of the intimate friends of Lincoln are alleged to have bought a considerable part of the edition and destroyed the books, but copies are in the principal libraries and in the best private collections.

Unterrified by the reception which had been accorded Lamon's work, William H. Herndon, for twenty years Lincoln's law partner, assisted by Jesse W. Weik, published in 1889 a Life of Lincoln, in three volumes.[1] The storm of denunciation that beat upon Herndon's head was fierce and long. The greater part of the edition disappeared. Libraries that contain it keep it under lock and key, and the prices bid for it at occasional book auctions contrast strikingly with those for which it went begging immediately after it was issued. Four years later,

assisted by Mr. Horace White, Mr. Herndon reissued the book in two volumes, with those passages elided which had given greatest offense.

These two biographies mark the rise and high-water mark of the demand for "the real Lincoln"; and nobody can deny that they were quite sufficiently realistic.

The next stage in the Lincoln biography was the ten-volume Life of Lincoln by his former secretaries, John G. Nicolay and John Hay. It was issued in 1890, and called itself "a history." It is a history rather than a biography; the biographical material in it was condensed into a single volume by Mr. Nicolay in 1904. This work is monumental, and may be said to attempt the giving of materials for the complete Lincoln rather than to be in itself an effort within the proper limits of biography.

The two-volume biography by John T. Morse, Jr., issued in 1893, was the first constructive piece of work in this field after the Nicolay and Hay material had become available; and it remains in some respects the best short Life of Abraham Lincoln; though the author's New England viewpoint militates against his correct appraisal of many features of the life of Lincoln.

The next period may be said to be the period of the magazine Lincoln, and to be represented at its best by the work of Ida M. Tarbell, which first appeared in *McClure's Magazine*, beginning in 1895, and was subsequently issued in book form in several editions beginning in 1900. This was a pictorial biography, with much new illustrative and documentary material, and is of permanent value.

Since 1900 the biographies that have been issued

have largely been devoted to specialized studies, as of Lincoln as a lawyer, Lincoln as a political leader, Lincoln as a statesman; and there have been innumerable books and articles made up of reminiscences of the men who knew Lincoln more or less intimately.

None of the biographies before Holland attempted anything that could be called a critical analysis of Lincoln's character. There is virtually nothing in the earliest Lives of Lincoln concerning his religion or any other important aspect of his private and personal life. In the nature of the case those books were superficial.

Furthermore, some of the more important biographies of more recent years have made no attempt at systematic character study. While there is something about Lincoln's religion in almost every one of them, that topic has been quite incidental and subordinate to the main purpose of most of the larger books. The authors have been content to take for the most part the ready-formed judgment of those whose views most nearly accorded with their own.

The field of inquiry concerning Lincoln's religion is both more narrow and broader than it would at first appear. Many even of the more important biographical works about Lincoln yield nothing of any real value, so far as this topic is concerned. On the other hand, the subject has been exploited in magazine articles, newspaper contributions, lectures and addresses almost innumerable and by no mean consistent.

The task, then, is more and other than that of making a scrapbook of what different authorities have said about Abraham Lincoln's religion. A vast amount has been said by people who had no personal knowledge

of the subject they were discussing and no adequate power of historical analysis. The volume of really first-hand evidence is not so vast as at first it appears; and while it cannot all be reconciled nor its direct contradictions eliminated, it is not hopelessly beyond the limits of constructive probability. It is possible to determine some facts about the religion of Abraham Lincoln with reasonable certainty and to interpret others in the light of their probable bearing upon the subject as a whole.

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CHAPTER III

THE ENVIRONMENT OF LINCOLN'S BOYHOOD

WE have read Buckle's *History of Civilization* to little effect if we have not learned that the development of an individual or a nation is profoundly influenced by environment. The biographers of Lincoln would appear to have kept this fact carefully in mind, for they have been at great pains to give to us detailed descriptions of the houses in which Lincoln lived and the neighborhoods where from time to time he resided. Although the camera and the descriptive power of the biographers have done much for us, they leave something to be desired in the way of sketching a background from which the Abraham Lincoln of the successive periods emerged into conditions of life and thought that were more or less religious. For the purpose of this present study the life of Lincoln divides itself into four parts.

The first is the period of his boyhood, from his birth in Kentucky until his coming of age and the removal of his family from Indiana into Illinois.

The second is the period of his early manhood, from the time he left his father's home until he took up his residence in Springfield.

The third is the period of his life in Springfield, from his first arrival on April 15, 1837, until his final departure on February 11, 1861, for his inauguration as President.

The fourth is the period covered by his presidency,

from his inauguration, March 4, 1861, until his death, April 15, 1865.

Before considering at length the testimony of the people who knew him, except as that testimony relates to these particular epochs, we will consider the life of Lincoln as it was related to the conditions in which he lived in these successive periods.

The first period in the life of Abraham Lincoln includes the twenty-one years from his birth to his majority, and is divided into two parts,—the first seven and one-half years of his life in the backwoods of Kentucky, and the following thirteen years in the wilderness of southern Indiana.

Abraham Lincoln, sixteenth President of the United States, was born near Hodgenville, Kentucky, on Sunday, February 12, 1809. He was the second child of Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln, who were married near Beechland, Washington County, Kentucky, on June 12, 1806, when Thomas was twenty-eight and Nancy twenty-three. Nine days before the birth of Abraham Lincoln the territory of Illinois was organized by Act of Congress; the boy and the future State were twin-born. For four years the family lived on the Rock Spring farm, three miles from Hodgenville, in Hardin, now Larue County, Kentucky. When he was four years old his parents moved to a better farm on Knob Creek. Here he spent nearly four years more, and he and his sister, Sarah, began going to school. His first teacher was Zachariah Riney; his second, Caleb Hazel.

In the autumn of 1816, Thomas Lincoln loaded his household goods upon a small flatboat of his own construction and floated down Knob Creek, Salt River, and the Ohio, and landed on the northern bank of the Ohio River. He thence returned and

brought his family, who traveled on horseback. The distance to where the goods had been left was only about fifty miles in a straight line from the old home in Kentucky, but was probably a hundred miles by the roads on which they traveled. Thomas doubtless rode one horse with a child behind him, and Nancy rode the other, also carrying a child behind her saddle.

When the family arrived at the point where the goods had been left, a wagon was hired, and Thomas Lincoln, with his wife, his two children, and all his worldly possessions, moved sixteen miles into the wilderness to a place which he had already selected, and there made his home. That winter and the greater part of the following year were spent in a "half-faced camp" from which the family moved in the following autumn to a log cabin, erected by Thomas Lincoln. For more than a year he was a squatter on this farm, but subsequently entered it and secured title from the government. Here Nancy Hanks Lincoln died, October 5, 1818, when Abraham was less than ten years old. A year later Thomas Lincoln returned to Kentucky and married Sally Bush Johnson, a widow, with three children. She brought with her better furniture than the cabin afforded, and also brought a higher type of culture than Thomas Lincoln had known. She taught her husband so that he was able with some difficulty to read the Bible and to sign his own name. On this farm in the backwoods in the Pigeon Creek settlement, with eight or ten families as neighbors, and with the primitive village of Gentryville a mile and a half distant, Abraham Lincoln grew to manhood. Excepting for a brief experience as a ferryman on the Ohio River and a trip to New Orleans which he made upon a flatboat, his horizon was bounded by this

environment from the time he was eight until he was twenty-one.

The cabin in which the Lincoln family lived was a fairly comfortable house. It was eighteen feet square and the logs were hewn. It was high enough to admit a loft, where Abe slept, ascending to it by wooden pins driven into the logs. The furniture, excepting that brought by Sally Bush, was very primitive and made by Thomas Lincoln. Three-legged stools answered for chairs, and the bedsteads had only one leg each, the walls supporting the other three corners.

Of the educational advantages, Mr. Lincoln wrote in 1860:

> "It was a wild region, with many bears and other wild animals still in the woods. There I grew up. There were some schools so-called, but no qualification was ever required of a teacher beyond readin', writin', and cipherin' to the Rule of Three. If a straggler supposed to understand Latin happened to sojourn in the neighborhood, he was looked upon as a wizard. There was absolutely nothing to excite ambition for education."—NICOLAY, p. 10.

Here he attended school for three brief periods. The first school was taught by Azel W. Dorsey, when Abraham was ten years old; the next by Andrew Crawford, when he was fourteen; and the third by a teacher named Swaney, whose first name Mr. Lincoln was unable to recall in later life. His schooling was under five different teachers, two in Kentucky and

three in Indiana. It was scattered over nine years and embraced altogether less than twelve months of aggregate attendance.

In Kentucky it is probable that his only textbook was Webster's Elementary Speller. It was popularly known as the "Old Blueback."

Webster's Speller is a good speller and more. Each section of words to be spelled is followed by short sentences containing those words, and at the end of the book are three illustrated lessons in Natural History—one on The Mastiff, another on The Stag, and the third on The Squirrel. Besides these are seven fables, each with its illustration and its moral lesson. I used this book in teaching school in the backwoods of Kentucky, and still have the teacher's copy which I thus employed.

The two Kentucky schools which Lincoln attended were undoubtedly "blab" schools. The children were required to study aloud. Their audible repetition of their lessons was the teacher's only assurance that they were studying;[2] and even while he was hearing a class recite he would spend a portion of his time moving about the room with hickory switch in hand, administering frequent rebuke to those pupils who did not study loud enough to afford proof of their industry.

In Indiana, Lincoln came under the influence of men who could cipher as far as the Rule of Three. He also learned to use Lindley Murray's English Reader, which he always believed, and with much reason, to be the most useful textbook ever put into the hands of an American youth (Herndon, I, 37). He also studied Pike's Arithmetic. Grammar he did not study in school, but later learned it under Mentor Graham in Illinois.

The first of these schools was only about a mile and a half distant from his home; the last was four miles, and his attendance was irregular.

In the second school, taught by Andrew Crawford, he learned whatever he knew of the usages of polite society; for Crawford gave his pupils a kind of drill in social usages (Herndon, I, 37).

In Swaney's school he probably learned that the earth was round. A classmate, Katy Roby, afterward Mrs. Allen Gentry, between whom and Abraham a boy-and-girl attachment appears to have existed, and who at the time was fifteen and Abe seventeen, is authority for the statement that as they were sitting together on the bank of the Ohio River near Gentry's landing, wetting their bare feet in the flowing water and watching the sun go down, he told her that it was the revolution of the earth which made the moon and sun appear to rise and set. He exhibited what to her appeared a profound knowledge of astronomy (Herndon, I, 39; Lamon's *Life*, p. 70).

It is not necessary for us to assume that Abraham knew very much more about astronomy than the little which he told to Katy Roby; but it is worth while to note in passing that when Abraham Lincoln learned that the earth was round, he probably learned something which his father did not know and which would have been admitted by no minister whom Abraham had heard preach up to this time.

We are ready now to consider the character of the preaching which Abraham Lincoln heard in his boyhood. Direct testimony is fragmentary of necessity; but it is of such character that we are able without difficulty to make a consistent mental picture of the kind of religious service with which he

was familiar.

A recent author has said that Lincoln never lived in a community having a church building until he went to the legislature in Vandalia in 1834 (Johnson, *Lincoln the Christian*, p. 31). This is probably true if we insist upon its meaning a house of worship owned exclusively by one denomination, but the same author reminds us that there was a log meeting-house[3] within three miles of Lincoln's childhood home in Kentucky (p. 22).

Dr. Peters says:

> "The prayers that Parson Elkin said above the mound of Nancy Hanks were the first public prayers to which Abraham ever listened"—*Abraham Lincoln's Religion*, p. 24.

This is absurdly incorrect. Abraham Lincoln almost certainly heard public prayers at intervals, probably from the time he was three months old.

Abraham Lincoln was born in February, or his mother probably would have taken him to church earlier; but by May or June, when there was monthly preaching at the log meeting-house three miles away, she mounted a horse and Thomas Lincoln another, he with Sarah sitting before him at the saddlebow and she with Abraham in her arms, and they rode to meeting. If they had had but one horse instead of two they would have gone just the same. She would have sat behind Thomas with Abraham in her arms and Thomas would have had Sarah on the horse before him. Thomas Lincoln was too shiftless to have a horse-block, but Nancy could mount her horse from any one of the numerous stumps in the vicinity of

the home. She and every other young mother in the neighborhood knew how to ride and carry a baby, and having once learned the art, the young mother was not permitted to forget it for several years.

Arrived at the log meeting-house, they hitched their horses to swinging limbs, where the animals could fight flies without breaking the bridle-reins. Nancy went inside immediately and took her seat on the left side of the room; Thomas remained outside gossiping with his neighbors concerning "craps" and politics, and maybe swapping a horse before the service had gotten fairly under way. After a while he heard the preacher in stentorian tones lining and singing the opening hymn, the thin, high voices of the women joining him feebly at first but growing a little more confident as the hymn proceeded. Then Thomas and his neighbors straggled in and sat on the right side of the house. The floor was puncheon and so were the seats; they were rudely split slabs, roughly hewn, and the second sitting from either end had an added element of discomfort in the projection of the two legs that had been driven in from the under side and were not sawed off flush with the surface of the slab. There were no glass windows. On either side of the house one section of a log may have been sawed out about four feet from the floor; but most of the light of the interior came in through the open door in mild weather, or was afforded by the fireplace in cold weather.

On the rude pulpit lay the preacher's Bible and hymn book, if he had a hymn book—no one else had one; and beside these were a bucket of water and a gourd. There was no time in the service when Thomas Lincoln did not feel free to walk up to the pulpit and drink a gourd of water, and the same was true of

every other member of the congregation, the preacher included. As for Nancy, she spread her riding-skirt on the seat under her and when her baby grew hungry she nursed him just as the other women nursed their babies.

To such congregations the author of this present book preached hundreds of times in the woods of Kentucky; and there is no essential feature of the church services which he does not know.

In the autumn, just before fodder-pulling time, there was an occasional camp-meeting or big revival, followed by a baptizing, which brought multitudes of people from long distances. They brought their provisions, or they stayed with friends, one cabin proving elastic enough to accommodate two or three households. Under these conditions the author of this book has slept many nights in houses of one room, with as many beds as the room could well contain, inhabited not only by the family but by visitors of both sexes; and in all that experience he is unable to recall any incident that was immodest.

When the converts of the camp-meeting or revival were baptized, they were led into the water with due solemnity; but as each one came to the surface he or she was likely to break forth into shouting, a proceeding which, as the author can testify, was sometimes embarrassing, if not indeed perilous,[4] to the officiating clergyman.

Herndon tells us of the fondness of the Hanks girls for camp-meeting and describes one in which Nancy appears to have participated a little time before her marriage (I, 14). We have no reason to believe that that was her last camp-meeting.

Thomas Lincoln is alleged by Herndon to have been

a Free-will Baptist in Kentucky, a Presbyterian in the latter part of his life in Indiana, and finally a Disciple (I, 11). He does not state where he obtained his information, but it is almost certain that he got it from Sally Bush Lincoln on the occasion of his visit to her in 1865; as she is the accredited source of most of the information of this character.

I am more than tempted to believe that either she or Herndon was incorrect in speaking of Thomas Lincoln's earliest affiliation as a Free-will Baptist. There were more kinds of Baptists in heaven and on earth than were understood in her philosophy; and I question whether the Free-will Baptists, who originated in New England, had by this time penetrated to so remote a section of Kentucky. What she probably told Herndon was that he was not of the most reactionary kind—the so-called "Hardshell" or anti-missionary Baptists. Of them we shall have something to say later. The Scripps biography, read and approved by Lincoln, said simply that his parents were consistent members of the Baptist Church. Nicolay and Hay do not record the membership of Thomas Lincoln in the Presbyterian Church, and one is more than tempted to question the accuracy of Herndon at this point. Presbyterianism had at that date very little part in the shaping of the life of the backwoods of Illinois and Indiana, as we shall see when we come to the life of Lincoln in Illinois. Nicolay and Hay tell us that "Thomas Lincoln joined the Baptist church at Little Pigeon in 1823. His oldest child, Sarah, followed his example three years later. They were known as consistent and active members of that communion" (Nicolay and Hay, I, 32-33). If Sarah joined the Baptist church in 1826, and the family was remembered as active in that church, the relation of Thomas Lincoln with the Presbyterians in

Indiana must have been brief, for he left that State in 1830. We are assured that he observed religious customs in his home and asked a blessing at the table; for one day, when the meal consisted only of potatoes, Abraham said to his father, that he regarded those as "mighty poor blessings" (Herndon, I, 24). While Thomas Lincoln was not an energetic man, there is no reason to doubt the consistency of his religion, in which he was certainly aided by Sally Bush Lincoln. That he died in the fellowship either of the Disciples or of the New Lights is probably correct; but the Presbyterian membership in Indiana, while not impossible, appears more likely to have been a mistake in Herndon's interpretation of Mrs. Lincoln's narrative.

Herndon's statement concerning Thomas Lincoln's religion is as follows:

> "In his religious belief he first affiliated with the Free-will Baptists. After his removal to Indiana he changed his adherence to the Presbyterians—or Predestinarians, as they were then called—and later united with the Christian—vulgarly called Campbellite—Church, in which latter faith he is supposed to have died" (I, 11-12).

I am satisfied that Herndon is mistaken in two if not in all three of these assertions. I am confident that Predestinarian was not a popular or commonly understood name for Presbyterians, but it was a name for one type of Baptists. Mrs. Lincoln probably told Herndon that her husband joined in Indiana, not the hardshell, or most reactionary kind of Baptists,

but the Predestinarians. Knowing that predestination was a doctrine of Presbyterianism, Mr. Herndon assumed that that was what the name implied. It implied nothing of the sort. Thomas Lincoln probably belonged to the old Two-Seed-in-the-Spirit Predestinarian Baptists, not quite as hard in their shell as the Hardshells, but very different from the Free-will Baptists or the Presbyterians, the kind whose preachers were accustomed to shout—"I'd rather have a hard shell than no shell at all!"

Dennis Hanks[5] was far from being impeccable authority on matters where his imagination permitted him to enlarge, but he seldom forgot anything, and still less frequently made it smaller than it really was. If Thomas Lincoln had ever sustained any relation to the Presbyterian Church, he would surely have told it, or some member of his family, jealous as those members were for the reputation of "Grandfather Lincoln," would not have failed to report it. In his interview with Mrs. Eleanor Atkinson, in which his family participated, Dennis evinced a definite attempt to set forth Thomas Lincoln in as favorable a light as possible, and there was a high and deserved tribute to his "Aunt Sairy," Thomas Lincoln's second wife.

> "Aunt Sairy sartainly did have faculty. I reckon we was all purty ragged and dirty when she got there. The fust thing she did was to tell me to tote one of Tom's carpenter benches to a place outside the door, near the hoss trough. Then she had me an' Abe an' John Johnson, her boy, fill the trough with spring water. She put out a gourd full of

> soft soap, and another one to dip water with, an' told us boys to wash up fur dinner. You just naturally had to be somebody when Aunt Sairy was around. She had Tom build her a loom, an' when she heerd o' some lime burners bein' round Gentryville, Tom had to mosey over an' git some lime an' whitewash the cabin. An' he made her an ash hopper fur lye, an' a chicken-house nothin' could git into. Then—te-he-he-he!—she set some kind of a dead-fall trap fur him, an' got Tom to jine the Baptist Church. Cracky, but Aunt Sally was some punkins!"—*American Magazine*, February, 1908, p. 364.

I am of opinion that what Mrs. Sarah Bush Lincoln told Herndon was that her husband sometimes attended the Presbyterian service, and that the church he joined was the Baptist, but not the Hardshell Baptist. But evidence is wholly lacking that he had any connection with the Presbyterian Church, or with the Free-will Baptists, of which latter sect he probably never heard.

The church at Farmington of which Thomas Lincoln became a member is not now in existence. I have endeavored through investigation in Farmington, and by correspondence with Mr. Robert T. Lincoln, to ascertain its denomination. It called itself "Christian," and Herndon did not doubt that that name indicated that it was a church of the denomination sometimes called "Campbellite." But that is not certain. Other denominations claim that as their distinctive name, and one of them was at that time active in that part

of Illinois. My inquiries have brought me no certain knowledge on this point; but Mr. Jesse W. Weik is of opinion that the denomination was that known as "New Light." It is possible that Herndon was in error in every one of his three affirmations concerning the religion of Thomas Lincoln, and that the President's father was never a Free-will Baptist, never a Presbyterian, and never a Disciple or Campbellite. I have endeavored to learn whether his change from the Baptist to the "Christian" church was a matter of conviction or convenience, but on this I have found nothing except a statement from the minister who buried him, in which it would appear that his change of polity was a matter of conviction. This minister spoke very highly of Thomas Lincoln, whom he had known well in the latter years of his life.

There has been undue attempt to credit the pious boy Abraham with the religious service conducted over the grave of his mother by Rev. David Elkin[6] some months after her demise. There is no good authority for this legend. Herndon probably tells the truth about it:

> "Within a few months, and before the close of the winter, David Elkin, an itinerant preacher whom Mrs. Lincoln had known in Kentucky, happened into the settlement, and in response to the invitation from the family and friends, delivered a funeral sermon over her grave. No one is able now to remember the language of Parson Elkin's discourse, but it is recalled that he commemorated the virtues and good phases of character, and passed in

> silence the few shortcomings and frailties of the poor woman sleeping under the winter's snow."
> —HERNDON, I, 28.

This does not compel us to believe that there had been no preacher in the Pigeon Creek settlement since the death of Nancy Hanks.[7] It was customary among these Kentucky-bred people to hold the funeral service some weeks or months after the burial. The author of this volume has attended many such services.

The reasons require some explanation. The dead were commonly buried on the day following death. There were, of course, no facilities for embalming or preserving the corpse for any great length of time. Preachers were nearly all farmers; and the particular minister with whose church the family was affiliated might be living at a considerable distance and be at that time at some distant place upon his wide circuit. No minister expected to preach every Sunday in any one place. A monthly appointment was the maximum attempted; and the more remote settlements were not reached statedly by any one preacher oftener than once in three months. There were occasional services, however, by other ministers riding through the country and preaching wherever they stayed overnight. It was the author's custom when coming unexpectedly into a valley to spread word up and down the creek that there would be preaching that night in the schoolhouse or in the home where he was entertained. The impromptu announcement never failed to bring a congregation.

What took David Elkin into Indiana we do not know. He may have been looking for a better farm than he had in Kentucky, where he could dig out a living

between his preaching appointments. He may have been burdened for the souls of certain families formerly under his care and now gone out like the Lincolns into a howling wilderness. The late summer and early autumn between the end of corn-plowing and the beginning of fodder-pulling afforded such a minister opportunity to throw his saddlebags over his horse and start on a longer circuit than usual; and the winter gave him still another opportunity for long absence. He took no money and he collected none, or next to none, but he had free welcome everywhere with pork and corn pone for supper and fried chicken for breakfast. Many a time the author of this volume has ridden up to a house just before suppertime, has partaken with the family of its customary cornbread and bacon or ham, and after preaching and a good night's rest has been wakened in the morning before the rising of the sun by a muffled squawk and flutter as one or more chickens were pulled down out of the trees. After this fashion did the people of the backwoods welcome the messengers of the Lord.

Not necessarily on his next appearance in a settlement is the preacher requested to conduct the funeral service of persons deceased since his last visit. The matter is arranged with more of deliberation. A date is set some time ahead and word is sent to distant friends.[8] After a time of general sickness such as had visited Pigeon Creek in the epidemic of the "milk sick," Parson Elkin may have had several funerals to preach in the same cemetery or at the schoolhouse nearest at hand. I have known a half-dozen funerals to be included in one sermon with full biographical particulars of each decedent and detailed descriptions of all the deathbed scenes, together with rapturous forecasts of the future bliss

of the good people who were dead and abundant warnings of the flaming hell that awaited their impenitent neighbors. Even those people who had not been noted for their piety during life were almost invariably slipped into heaven through a deathbed repentance or by grace of the uncovenanted mercies of God. It is the business of all preachers to be very stern with the living and very charitable toward the dead.[9]

I must add a further word about the custom of deferred funerals. Although the burial was conducted without religious service, it was not permitted to be celebrated in neglect. The news that a man was dying would bring the sympathetic neighbors from miles around, and horses would be tied up the creek and down while people waited in friendly sorrow and conversed in hushed voices in the presence of the solemn dignity of death. That night a group of neighbors would "sit up" with the dead, and keep the family awake with frequent and lugubrious song.

Next day the grave must be dug; and that required a considerable part of the male population of the settlement. If only two or three men came in the morning they would sit and wait for others and go home for the dinner and come back. It thus has happened more than once in my experience that we have brought the body to the burial and have had to wait an hour or more in sun or wind for the finishing of the digging of the grave.

I remember well an instance in which death occurred in the family of one of the county officials. His wife died suddenly, and under sad conditions. I mounted my horse and rode four or five miles to his home. I hitched my horse to the low-swinging limb of a beech tree and threaded my way among other horses

into the yard, which was filled with men, and up to the porch, which was crowded with women. Passing inside, I spoke my word of sympathy to the grief-stricken husband and his children. Then I passed out into the yard and moved from group to group among the men. Presently a neighbor of the sorrowing husband approached me and asked me to step aside with him for private converse. This was strictly in accordance with the custom of the country, and I walked with him behind the corn-crib. He said to me: "Mr. McCune"—naming the bereaved husband —"wants to know whether you have come here as a preacher or as a neighbor?" I answered, "Tell him that I have come as a neighbor." With this word he returned to the house. Up on the hillside I could see the leisurely movements of the grave-diggers. From the shed behind the house came the rhythmic tap of the hammer driving in the tacks that fastened the white glazed muslin lining of the home-made coffin. We had some little time still to wait before either the grave or the coffin would be finished. Presently the neighbor returned to where I waited behind the corn-crib and brought with him Mr. McCune. The latter shook my hand warmly and said, in substance: "I appreciate your coming and the respect which you thus show for me and for my dead wife. I was glad to see you come when you entered the house, but was a little embarrassed because I knew it to be your custom to preach the funeral sermon at the time of the burial. I have no objection to that custom; and while we are Baptists [he pronounced it Babtist, and so I have no doubt did Thomas Lincoln], there is no man whom I would rather have preach my wife's sermon than you. We shall undoubtedly have a Baptist preacher when the time for the funeral comes, but I hope you also will be present and

participate in the service. But it is not our custom to hold the service at the time of the burial, and we have distant friends who should be notified. Moreover, there is another consideration. I have been twice married, and I never yet have got round to it to have my first wife's funeral preached. It seems to me that it would be a discourtesy to my first wife's memory to have my second wife's sermon preached before the first. What I now plan to do is to have the two funerals at once, and I hope you will be present and participate."

I need only add that before I departed from that region he was comfortably married to his third wife, not having gotten round to it to have the funeral sermon of either of his first two wives. I am unable to say whether when he finally got round to it there was any increase in the number. It never was my fortune to conduct the joint funeral of two wives of the same man at the same time; but I have more than once been present where a second wife was prominent among the mourners; and I sometimes believed her to be sincerely sorry that the first wife was dead.

It is not easy for people who have not lived amid these conditions and at the same time to have known other conditions to estimate aright the religious life of a backwoods community. Morse, whose biography of Lincoln is to be rated high, is completely unable to view this situation from other than his New England standpoint. He says:

> "The family was imbued with a peculiar, intense, but unenlightened form of Christianity, mingled with curious superstition, prevalent in the backwoods, and begotten by the

> influence of the vast wilderness upon illiterate men of a rude native force. It interests scholars to trace the evolution of religious faiths, but it might not be less suggestive to study the retrogression of religion into superstition. Thomas Lincoln was as restless in matters of creed as of residence, and made various changes in both during his life. These were, however, changes without improvement, and, so far as he was concerned, his son Abraham might have grown up to be what he himself was contented to remain" (I, 10).

This criticism is partly just, but not wholly so. There was superstition enough in the backwoods religion, and Abraham Lincoln never wholly divested himself of it; but it was not all superstition. There was a very real religion on Pigeon Creek.

In like manner, also, it is difficult for Lincoln's biographers to strike an even balance between adoring idealization of log-cabin life and horrified exaggeration of its squalor. Here again Morse is a classic example of the attempt to be so honest about Lincoln's poverty as to miss some part of the truth about it.

The Lincoln family was poor, even as poverty was estimated in the backwoods. Lincoln himself was painfully impressed with the memory of it, and Herndon and Lamon, who understood it better than most of his biographers, felt both for themselves and for Lincoln the pathos of his descent from "the poor whites"; but there is no evidence that Lincoln felt this

seriously at the time. His melancholy came later, and was not the direct heritage of his childhood poverty. Life had its joys for families such as his. Poverty was accepted as in some sort the common lot, and also as a temporary condition out of which everybody expected sometime to emerge. Meantime the boy Abraham Lincoln had not only the joy of going to mill and to meeting, but also the privilege of an occasional frolic. We know of one or two boisterous weddings where he behaved himself none too well. Besides these there were other unrecorded social events on Pigeon Creek where the platter rolled merrily and he had to untangle his long legs from under the bench and move quickly when his number was called or pay a forfeit and redeem it. He played "Skip-to-My-Lou" and "Old Bald Eagle, Sail Around," and "Thus the Farmer Sows His Seed," and he moved around the room singing about the millwheel and had to grab quickly when partners were changed or stand in the middle and be ground between the millstones. As large a proportion of people's known wants were satisfied on Pigeon Creek as on some fashionable boulevards. We need not seek to hide his poverty nor idealize it unduly; neither is it necessary to waste overmuch of pity upon people who did not find their own condition pitiable.

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What kind of man had been produced in this environment and as the result of the conditions of his heredity and of his inherent qualities? What do we know about the Abraham Lincoln who in 1830 took simultaneous leave of Indiana and his boyhood, and entered at once upon his manhood and the new State, that, twin-born with him, was waiting his arrival?

He was a tall, awkward, uncouth backwoodsman, strong of muscle, temperate and morally clean. He had physical strength and was not a bully; was fond of a fight but fought fairly and as a rule on the side of weakness and of right. He was free from bad habits of all kinds, was generous, sympathetic, and kind of heart. He was as yet uninfluenced by any women except his own dead mother and his stepmother. He was socially shy, and had not profited greatly by the meager lessons in social usage which had been taught in Andrew Crawford's school. He was fond of cock-fighting and of boisterous sports, and had a sufficient leadership to proclaim himself "the big buck of the lick" and to have that declaration pass unchallenged.

He could read, write, and cipher, and was eager for learning. He was ambitious, but his ambitions had no known focus. He was only moderately industrious, but could work hard when he had to do so. He had some ambition to write and to speak in public, but as yet he had little idea what he was to write or speak about. He was a great, hulking backwoodsman, with vague and haunting aspirations after something better and larger than he had known or seemed likely to achieve.

What do we know about the spiritual development of the young Boanerges who grew almost overnight in his eleventh year into a six-footer and was so wearied by the effort that he was slow of body and mind and was thought by some to be lazy ever afterward?

We know the books he read—the Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Æsop's Fables*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and Weems' *Life of Washington*. It was a good collection, and he made the most of it. Sarah Bush Lincoln noted that

while he did not like to work he liked to read, and she said, "I induced my husband to permit Abe to study" (Herndon, I, 36).

John Hanks said of him, "He kept the Bible and *Æsop's Fables* always within reach, and read them over and over again."

Sarah Bush did not claim that he showed any marked preference for the Bible. Lamon quotes her as saying, "He seemed to have a preference for the other books" (*Life*, pp. 34, 486). But he certainly read the Bible with diligence, as his whole literary style shows. Indeed, if we had only his coarse "First Chronicles of Reuben," which we could heartily wish he had never written, and whose publication in Herndon's first edition was one of the chief reasons for an expurgated edition,[10] we should know that even then Abe Lincoln, rough, uncouth and vulgar as he was, was modeling his style upon the Bible.

We are told that when he went to church he noted the oddities of the preachers and afterward mimicked them (Lamon: *Life*, pp. 55, 486). This might have been expected, for two reasons. First, he had a love of fun and of very boisterous fun at that; secondly, he had a fondness for oratory, and this was the only kind of oratory he knew anything about.

It is a remarkable fact that the Lincoln family appears never at any time in its history to have been strongly under the influence of Methodism.[11] This is not because they did not know of it; no pioneer could hide so deep in the wilderness as to be long hidden from the Methodist circuit riders. But the prevailing and almost the sole type of religion in that part of Indiana during Lincoln's boyhood was Baptist, and in spite of all that Mrs. Lincoln believed about

the freedom of it, it was a very unprogressive type of preaching. The preachers bellowed and spat and whined, and cultivated an artificial "holy tone" and denounced the Methodists and blasphemed the Presbyterians and painted a hell whose horror even in the backwoods was an atrocity. Against it the boy Abe Lincoln rebelled. Many another boy with an active mind has been driven by the same type of preaching into infidelity.

Dr. Johnson quotes as indicative of the religious mind of the young Lincoln the four lines[12] which in his fourteenth year he wrote on the flyleaf of his schoolbook, and the two lines which he wrote in the copybook of a schoolmate:

"*Abraham Lincoln*

his hand and pen—

he will be good but

God knows When";

and

"*Good boys who to their books apply*

Will all be great men by and by."

Commenting on these Dr. Johnson says: "These show two things: First, that the youthful boy had faith in his mother's God; and, second, that he believed his mother's teachings."[13]

In like manner Dr. Johnson takes the four hymns which Dennis Hanks remembered to have been sung by himself and Abe and says:

> "A soul that can appreciate these hymns must recognize, first, that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin; second, that Jesus Christ died upon the Cross for the salvation of the world; third, that life without the Saviour is an empty bubble, and, fourth, that loyal devotion to the Christ and his cause is man's highest calling, and the test of true character."—*Lincoln the Christian*, pp. 28-29.

This is very far-fetched. It shows only that Abe sang such songs, good, bad, and indifferent, as were current in his day, and without any very fine discrimination either in songs sacred or secular. If one were to make a creed out of any of his poetry in this period, it were better to find it in his jingle, about the Kickapoo Indian, Johnny Kongapod.[14] He was supposed to have composed an epitaph for himself that ran on this wise:

"*Here lies poor Johnny Kongapod;*

Have mercy on him, gracious God,

As he would do if he was God

And you were Johnny Kongapod."

It matters not for our purpose that these lines were not strictly original with Johnny Kongapod. We meet them in George Macdonald's story "David Elginbrod," and they have been used doubtless in rural England for generations. But they involve a certain rude and

noble faith that the Judge of all the earth will do right and that divine justice and human justice have a common measure. Lincoln never forgot that, and he learned it on Pigeon Creek.

Herndon is our authority, if we needed any, that the Baptist preaching of Lincoln's boyhood made him a lifelong fatalist.[15] He emerged into manhood with the conviction that "whatever is to be will be," and Mrs. Lincoln declared that this was his answer to threats concerning his assassination; that it had been his lifelong creed and continued still to be the ruling dogma of his life.

It would have gladdened the heart of Sarah Bush if her stepson, whom she loved with a tenderness almost surpassing that which she bestowed upon her own flesh and blood, had manifested in his youth some signs of that irresistible grace which was supposed to carry the assurance of conversion as an act not of man but of the Holy Spirit. He did not manifest that grace in the form in which she desired. She could not consistently blame him very much, for, according to her own creed and that of Thomas Lincoln, nothing that he could have done of his own volition would have mattered very much.

Horace Bushnell's *Christian Nurture* had not yet been written; and if it had there was not a preacher among the Baptists in southern Indiana who would not have denounced it as a creation of the devil. There were no Sunday schools in those churches, and when they began to appear they were vigorously opposed. There was no Christian nurture for the boy Abe Lincoln save the sincere but lethargic religion of his father and the motherly ministrations of his stepmother.

But "Abe was a good boy." With tears in her eyes

Sarah Bush could remember that he never gave her a cross word. He was unregenerate, but not unlovable; and he had more faith than perhaps he realized.

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CHAPTER IV

THE ENVIRONMENTS OF LINCOLN'S YOUNG MANHOOD

THE second period of Lincoln's religious life extends from his removal into Illinois in March of 1830 until the establishment of his residence in Springfield, April 15, 1837.

Thomas Lincoln was a thriftless farmer who blamed external conditions for his misfortunes. Following a second appearance of the "milk sick," which came to southern Indiana in the winter of 1829, he and his family removed in March of 1830 to Illinois. Abraham was twenty-one years of age. He assisted his father to get established in the new home, to which a wearying journey of fourteen days had brought the household, and then set out in life for himself. For several months he worked near home, but in the spring of 1831 he made his second flatboat trip to New Orleans. The boat stuck on a dam at Rutledge's mill at New Salem, and his ingenuity in getting it over the dam won him local fame and had something to do with his subsequent establishment of a home there. The flatboat stuck on April 19, 1831. In June he returned to New Salem and entered into business with Denton Offutt in a small and non-remunerative general store. While waiting for the opening of this store he became acquainted with Mentor Graham, a school teacher of local celebrity, whom Lincoln assisted as clerk of a local election, and through him learned the contents of Kirkham's

Grammar, and also acquired the essential elements of surveying. New Salem was a sporadic town which had no good reason to exist. It was established in 1829 and lasted barely seven years. It was located on the Sangamon River, some fifteen miles from Springfield.

In February, 1832, this flatboat hand, then working as clerk, began his canvass for the Legislature, his formal announcement of candidacy appearing March 9. He was defeated, but received an encouraging local vote. In 1832 he had a brief experience as a soldier, serving in the Black Hawk War, starting in pursuit of the Indians on April 27 and returning in July. Excepting for his absences at the Black Hawk War and in attendance upon the meetings of the Legislature in Vandalia, he was in New Salem practically during the whole of the history of that little town. He established a partnership in the firm of Lincoln & Berry, keepers of a general store, a business for which he had no qualification, and he accumulated debts, which he was unable to pay in full until after his first term in Congress seventeen years later. On May 7, 1833, he became postmaster of the microscopic village of New Salem, and held that position until May 30, 1836, about which date the town disappeared. In August, 1834, he was elected to the Legislature, then sitting at Vandalia, and had an important share in the removal of the state capital from there to Springfield.

In New Salem occurred two of Lincoln's three recorded love affairs.[16] In 1834 he fell in love with Ann Rutledge, to whom he became engaged, and who died, August 25, 1835. In the autumn of 1836 he made love to Miss Mary Owens, who refused him. These two love affairs are related in detail by Lamon

and by Herndon; the second of them gave rise to Lincoln's letter to Mrs. Browning, one of the least creditable things that ever came from his pen (Herndon, I, 192).

Heart-broken over the death of Ann Rutledge and ashamed of himself for his lack of gallantry in his love affair with Miss Owens, he saw New Salem doomed in all its hopes of being a city.

While sitting about the store waiting for business which did not come, he read law after a desultory fashion, becoming what he called not inappropriately "a mast-fed lawyer." For the benefit of any reader to whom this term conveys no meaning, it may be stated that "mast" consists of acorns, nuts, and other edible commodities, which hogs running at large in the wilderness are able to feed upon. Between a hog corn-fed in a stye and a backwoods mast-fed razor-back, there is a marked difference, and Lincoln's phrase was a very apt one. In the autumn of 1836 he obtained a law license. On March, 1837, he was admitted to the bar. On April 15, 1837, he moved to Springfield.

With his Springfield experience we shall deal later; that is an epoch by itself. We now consider the conditions of life in New Salem and their influence in shaking the religious character of Abraham Lincoln. New Salem, while an insignificant hamlet, was located on the Sangamon River and received its share of the travel to and from Springfield. Its central institutions were its tavern, where Lincoln boarded, and the store, where he read grammar and law, discussed politics, and occasionally sold goods.

The influence of life in New Salem upon the mind of Abraham Lincoln was very marked. We must not make the mistake of considering it solely in the

character of a poor little frontier town destined to short life and in its day of no consequence to the world. To Lincoln it was a city, and it had its own ambitions to become a greater city. Although it had scarcely twenty houses, not one of them costing much over a hundred dollars, and not more than a hundred inhabitants, it was to him no mean city. Here Lincoln developed rapidly. He read, discussed, thought, wrote, and spoke on a wide variety of subjects. His style was that of florid declamation, a stump oratory with some affectation of erudition. He made the most of his few books, and every one of them left its deep impression upon him. He continued to read the Bible, and grew somewhat familiar with Shakespeare, Burns, and even Byron. While there was no church building in New Salem, and church services were irregular, such services as were held were generally in the tavern where he boarded, a tavern kept at first by James Rutledge and afterward by Henry Onstott. It is interesting to cull out of T. G. Onstott's reminiscences a number that are based on his own recollections, supplemented perhaps by traditions received from his father:

> "After James Rutledge moved out of the log tavern, my father, Henry Onstott, moved in and occupied it from 1833 till 1835, and still had for a boarder Abraham Lincoln. It was at this time that my early impressions of him were formed. We did not know at that time that we were entertaining an angel unawares. My first knowledge of him was as a great marble player. He kept us small boys running in all

> directions gathering up the marbles he would scatter. During this time he followed surveying, having learned in six weeks from books furnished him by John Calhoun, of Springfield. About this time he commenced to read some law-books which he borrowed of Bowling Green, who lived one-half mile north of Salem. I think my father and Esquire Green did more than any other two men in determining Lincoln's future destiny."— T. G. ONSTOTT: *Lincoln and Salem—Pioneers of Menard and Mason Counties*, p. 25.

Of Lincoln's habits he says:

> "Lincoln never drank liquor of any kind and never chewed or smoked. We never heard him swear, though Judge Weldon said at the Salem Chautauqua that once in his life when he was excited he said, 'By Jing!'"—ONSTOTT: *Lincoln and Salem*, p. 73.

Of Peter Cartwright, Onstott says:

> "He was a great man for camp-meetings and prayer meetings. He was converted at a camp-meeting, and in his early ministry lived in a tented grove from two to three months in a year. He said: 'May the day be eternally distant when camp-meetings, class meetings, prayer

> meetings, and love feasts shall be laid aside in Methodist churches.'...
>
> "There was sound preaching in those days. The preachers preached hell and damnation more than they do now. They could hold a sinner over the pit of fire and brimstone till he could see himself hanging by a slender thread, and he would surrender and accept the gospel that was offered to him."—ONSTOTT: *Lincoln and Salem*, pp. 120, 127.

Of one of these preachers, Abraham Bale, Onstott says:

> "He had a habit when preaching of grasping his left ear with his hand, then leaning over as far as he could and lowering his voice. He would commence to straighten up and his voice would rise to a high key. He would pound the Bible with his fist and stamp the floor, and carry everything before him. He created excitement in the first years of his ministry in Salem. He was a Baptist, though not of the hardshell persuasion."—ONSTOTT: *Lincoln and Salem*, p. 149.

This was the general and accepted habit of Baptist preachers in that movement, and the author has heard scores of sermons delivered in this fashion.

Of the religious life of early Illinois and of frontier communities in general, Professor Pease says:

> "Religion came to be the most universally persuasive intellectual force of the frontier. As might be expected, on the frontier the first tendency was toward a disregard of religious observances. The emigrant from the older settled regions left behind him the machinery and the establishment of sectarian religion. Until that machinery could be set up again on the frontier he lived without formal worship and often for the time at least the sense of the need of it passed out of his life. In cases where observance had been due to social convention, there was no doubt a welcome feeling of freedom and unrestraint.
>
> "Normally the frontiersman was unreligious. Birkbeck noted with relish the absence of ceremony at baptism or funeral and the tolerance of all backwoods preachers alike, whether they raved or reasoned. Sunday was a day for riot and disorder. Other observers looked with horror on such a state of things, did their best to set up at least stated regular worship, and noted an improvement in morals as a result."—PEASE: *Centennial History of Illinois*, II, 23.

There were, however, some compensations. Fordham wrote:

> "This is not the land of hypocrisy. It would not here have its reward. Religion is not the road to wordly respectability, nor a possession of it the cloak of immorality."—*Personal Narrative*, p. 128.

Of the sporadic nature of much of the religious effort on the frontier, Professor Buck says:

> "In spite of the tremendous exertions of the pioneer preachers, many of the remote settlements must have been practically devoid of religious observances, and even in the older settlements the influence of occasional visitations, however inspiring they might be, was often lacking in permanence."—*Illinois in 1818*, p. 179.

Of the lack of permanence there may be some room for a difference of judgment; there certainly was lack of continuity. As in Kentucky and southern Indiana, and for a time in southern Illinois, there was no expectation of a regular weekly religious service conducted by any one minister, but preachers moved in extended circuits and no considerable settlement was long without occasional religious service.

There was much godlessness in many of the early settlements. John Messenger wrote in 1815: "The American inhabitants in the villages appear to have very little reverence for Christianity or serious things in any point of view."

While there was some attempt at Sabbath observance, Reynolds says:

> "In early times in many settlements of Illinois, Sunday was observed by the Americans only as a day of rest from work. They generally were employed in hunting, fishing, getting up their stock, hunting bees, breaking young horses, shooting at marks, horse and foot racing, and the like. When the Americans were to make an important journey they generally started on Sunday and never on Friday; they often said; 'the better the day the better the deed,'"—REYNOLDS: *My Own Times*, p. 80.

One must not infer from the irregularity of religious services that the people in these new regions were wholly without religion. Professor Buck says:

> "The spiritual welfare of the Illinois pioneers was not neglected. The religious observances, with the exception of those of the French Catholics, were of the familiar type. The principal Protestant denominations at the close of the territorial period were the Methodists and the Baptists, the latter classified as 'regular,' or 'hardshell,' and separating. Presbyterianism was just beginning to get a foothold. The ministers were of two types—the circuit rider, who covered wide stretches of country and devoted all his time to religious work, and the occasional preacher

> who supplemented his meager income from the church by farming or some other occupation."—BUCK: *Illinois in 1818*, p. 173.

Governor Ford has left an account of the unlearned but zealous frontier preachers, of their sermons, and of the results of their work, which cannot easily be improved upon:

> "Preachers of the gospel frequently sprang up from the body of the people at home, without previous training, except in religious exercises and in the study of the Holy Scriptures. In those primitive times it was not thought to be necessary that a teacher of religion should be a scholar. It was thought to be his business to preach from a knowledge of the Scriptures alone, to make appeals warm from the heart, to paint heaven and hell to the imagination of the sinner, to terrify him with the one, and to promise the other as a reward for a life of righteousness. However ignorant these first preachers may have been, they could be at no loss to find congregations still more ignorant, so that they were still capable of instructing someone. Many of them added to their knowledge of the Bible, a diligent perusal of Young's *Night Thoughts*, Watts' hymns, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Hervey's

Meditations, a knowledge of which gave more compass to their thoughts, to be expressed in a profuse, flowery language, and raised their feelings to the utmost height of poetical enthusiasm.

"Sometimes their sermons turned upon matters of controversy; unlearned arguments on the subject of free grace, baptism, free-will, election, faith, good works, justification, sanctification, and the final perseverance of the saints. But that in which they excelled, was the earnestness of their words and manner, leaving no doubt of the strongest conviction in their own minds, and in the vividness of the pictures which they drew of the ineffable blessedness of heaven, and the awful torments of the wicked in the fire and brimstone appointed for eternal punishment. These, with the love of God to sinful man, the sufferings of the Saviour, the dangerous apathy of sinners, and exhortations to repentance, furnished themes for the most vehement and passionate declamations. But above all, they continually inculcated the great principles of justice and sound morality.

"As many of these preachers were nearly destitute of learning and

knowledge, they made up in loud hallooing and violent action what they lacked in information. And it was a matter of astonishment to what length they could spin out a sermon embracing only a few ideas. The merit of a sermon was measured somewhat by the length of it, by the flowery language of the speaker, and by his vociferation and violent gestures. Nevertheless, these first preachers were of incalculable benefit to the country. They inculcated justice and morality, and to the sanction of the highest human motives to regard them, added those which arise from a belief of the greatest conceivable amount of future rewards and punishments. They were truly patriotic also; for at a time when the country was so poor that no other kind of ministry could have been maintained in it, they preached without charge to the people, working week days to aid the scanty charities of their flocks, in furnishing themselves with a scantier living. They believed with a positive certainty that they saw the souls of men rushing to perdition; and they stepped forward to warn and to save, with all the enthusiasm and self-devotion of a generous man who risks his own life to save his neighbor from drowning. And to them are we indebted for the first

Christian character of the Protestant portion of this people."—THOMAS FORD: *History of Illinois*, pp. 38-40.

"Of the hostility of certain of the early Baptists to enlightenment, there is abundant evidence in their own fierce opposition to their ablest minister, John Mason Peck. He was born in 1789 in the Congregational atmosphere of Connecticut, but, becoming a Baptist by conviction, became a missionary to the West in 1817. His foes were they of his own household. They fiercely fought against Bible societies, Sunday schools, and missionary societies. In 1828, when Peter Cartwright and James Lemen endeavored to secure the passage of a bill for the prevention of vice and immorality, there was an attempt to amend it in the interests of certain of the Hardshell Baptists by adding to the section against the disturbance of public worship a clause to fine in any sum not less than five dollars or more than fifteen any person who on Sunday would sell any pamphlet or book or take up an offering 'for the support of missionary societies, Bible societies, or Sunday school.' There were not less than twelve members of the House of Representatives who voted for this bill."—PEASE: *Centennial History of Illinois*, II, 28,

29.

One evidence of the hostility of many of the early inhabitants and especially of some who were active in politics toward organized religion, as well as the tendency of ministers of that period to participate in politics, is found in the fact that Illinois narrowly escaped having in her Constitution a provision disqualifying all ministers to hold office in the State. When the Constitutional Convention assembled at Kaskaskia this question was earnestly discussed, and the controversy was waged also in the columns of the *Western Intelligencer*, which was published in Kaskaskia from 1806 to 1814. A writer who signed himself "A Foe to Religious Tyranny" roundly denounced the political sermons of certain of the ministers, and charged that they intended to disqualify any citizens for office excepting "professors of religion."

When the first draft of the Constitution was submitted in August, 1818, Article II, Section 26, read: "Whereas the ministers of the gospel are by their profession dedicated to God and the care of souls, and ought not to be diverted from the great duties of their function: Therefore, no minister of the gospel or priest of any denomination whatever, shall be eligible to a seat in either house of the Legislature."

This article was warmly commended by a writer in the *Intelligencer* under date of August 12, 1818, who commended the framers of the Constitution for their provision "to exempt ministers of the gospel from the servile and arduous drudgery of legislation, and of electioneering to procure themselves seats in the Legislature," but urged the convention to extend the provision so as to disqualify ministers from holding

any office whatever. A number of members of the Constitutional Convention favored this drastic proscription. On the first reading the proposed article was approved; but it was later reconsidered and voted down.

Ministers thus were left on a plane with other citizens as regarded the holding of public office; and their candidacy for the Legislature especially was not infrequent; indeed, one of the writers who engaged in this controversy considered the appalling possibility that the Constitutional Convention might have been composed entirely of ministers, and that some future session of the Legislature might find them in complete control. There never was any danger that ministers would make up a controlling faction in the Illinois Legislature; but they were not a negligible element in the early political life of the State.

Lincoln soon came into the political atmosphere which was thus affected by religious controversy, and it had an influence upon him. His most formidable and persistent opponent, until he met Douglas, was a Methodist preacher, the redoubtable Peter Cartwright who defeated him in a contest for the Legislature and whom he defeated in a race for Congress. Lincoln was quite familiar with religion in its relation to politics in early Illinois.

Of Lincoln's theological opinions, especially those which he cherished while at New Salem, and which Herndon believed he did not materially change, Herndon says:

> "Inasmuch as he was often a candidate for public office Mr. Lincoln said as little as possible

about his religious opinions, especially if he failed to coincide with the orthodox world. In illustration of his religious code, I once heard him say that it was like that of an old man named Glenn, in Indiana, whom he heard speak at a religious meeting, and who said, 'When I do good, I feel good; when I do bad, I feel bad; and that's my religion.' In 1834, while still living in New Salem, and before he became a lawyer, he was surrounded by a class of people exceedingly liberal in matters of religion. Volney's *Ruins* and Paine's *Age of Reason* passed from hand to hand, and furnished food for the evening's discussion in the tavern and village store. Lincoln read both these books, and assimilated them into his own being. He prepared an extended essay—called by many, a book—in which he made an argument against Christianity, striving to prove that the Bible was not inspired, and therefore not God's revelation, and that Jesus Christ was not the Son of God. The manuscript containing these audacious and comprehensive propositions he intended to have published or given a wide circulation in some other way. He carried it to the store, where it was read and freely discussed. His friend and employer, Samuel Hill, was

> among the listeners, and seriously questioning the propriety of a promising young man like Lincoln fathering such unpopular notions, he snatched the manuscript from his hands, and thrust it into the stove. The book went up in flames, and Mr. Lincoln's political future was secure. But his infidelity and his skeptical views were not diminished."—HERNDON, III, 439-440.

We shall have occasion in a subsequent chapter to recur to this so-called book which Lincoln is alleged to have written while in New Salem. It is sufficient at this time to remember, and the fact must not be overlooked, that our knowledge of this book depends solely upon the testimony of Herndon. Herndon never saw the book, and so far as is known he never talked with anyone who had seen it. He affirms that Lincoln never denied having written a book on the subject of religion, but he nowhere claims that Lincoln told him in detail concerning its contents. Herndon's principal visit, and perhaps the only one which he made to New Salem in quest of literary material, was in October in 1866. He had attended the Circuit Court of Menard County on Saturday, October 13, and on Sunday morning at 11:20 A.M., as he tells us with painstaking and lawyer-like particularity, he visited the site of New Salem. That afternoon and a part of the next morning, which he says was misty, cloudy, foggy, and cold, he made inquiry of the oldest inhabitant of that part of the country and wrote out the substance of his lecture on Ann Rutledge. This was a whole generation after Lincoln had removed from the now depopulated New

Salem, and there were very few people in the neighborhood who remembered him through any personal association. The town had completely disappeared, but Herndon found the site of the houses that once had stood there, and also found and identified the grave of Ann Rutledge. To that visit we are indebted for a good deal of our knowledge of the background of Lincoln's life during this formative epoch. But we are not bound to accept all of Mr. Herndon's inferences regarding it.

It must be remembered that Herndon's lecture did not pass unchallenged. So small was the audience when he delivered it and so uniformally unfavorable were the press comments that he never repeated this lecture, and some of its statements are open to question. It is not in this lecture that we learn of the essay which Lincoln is alleged to have written in criticism of the Bible, but that was the visit on which Herndon appears to have gathered his information concerning Lincoln's more intimate relations with New Salem.

There is no good reason to doubt that Lincoln during this period read Volney and Paine, and that having read them he rushed rather quickly to paper and set down his immature thoughts in argumentative fashion. It would divert us from our present purpose of portraying the environment if we were to consider in detail at this point the story of Lincoln's burnt book. The reader will do well to remember, however, that Herndon, though truthful, was not infallible nor on this point free from bias; that neither Herndon nor anyone else then living was known to have seen, much less to have read, the book alleged to have been burned thirty-two years before; and that there was abundant opportunity not only for exaggeration

but even for a complete misunderstanding concerning the actual content of this book.

Indeed, this incident has been allowed to pass with too little criticism or challenge. Those who did not believe Lincoln to have been a man of faith were glad to accept the story; those who believed that he later was a man of faith were not wholly unwilling to believe that he had once been an infidel and later had undergone a marked change of opinion. There seemed no good reason to dispute Herndon, and no one else was supposed to know more about the subject than he. But we shall discover that Herndon may not have learned the whole truth. There is more than a possibility that the manuscript that was burned was a document of quite another sort.

If Lincoln was regarded as an infidel, and if he ever was tempted to think himself one, we should not be justified in accepting that judgment as final until we knew and considered what was required in that time and place to constitute a man an infidel.

In the mind of most if not all of the Baptist preachers whom Lincoln heard while he was at New Salem, a belief that the earth was round was sufficient to brand a man as an infidel. The Methodists, as a rule, would have admitted that the earth was round, but Peter Cartwright would probably have considered a man an infidel who believed that the earth was not created in seven literal days. At Vandalia, Lincoln heard some ministers of wider vision, such as Edward Beecher and Julian M. Sturtevant, who were occasionally there, and John Mason Peck; but these experiences were rare. His association with Methodists was largely in the political arena, where he crossed swords three times with Peter Cartwright. That doughty hero of the Cross was born in Virginia

on September 1, 1786, and exerted a mighty influence for good in early Illinois. With a nominal salary of $80 a year, and an actual salary of $30 or $40, he rode thousands of miles through deep mud, baptized 8,000 children and 4,000 adults, conducted camp-meetings and political campaigns, and sang and shouted and in his own language whipped the devil round the stump and hit him a crack at every jump until his death at Pleasant Plains, Illinois, September 25, 1872. He defeated Lincoln for the Legislature, and was defeated by him for Congress in 1846. So far as we know, Lincoln left no record of his feeling toward Cartwright and the Methodists. He could not have failed to respect such men, but it is not altogether certain that he was tempted to love them.

By the time Lincoln was seventeen, and possibly earlier, he believed the earth to be round. I shall not succeed in making the reader understand the possible effect of this discovery upon him and certain of his associates without relating an experience of my own.

In the summer of 1881, being then a college student on vacation, I taught school in the mountains of Kentucky far beyond the end of the railroad. The school was a large and prosperous one and brought many students from other districts who paid a trifling tuition and were preparing to teach. The curriculum included everything from the alphabet to a simplified normal course. A majority of my pupils had but one textbook, Webster's Blueback Speller. I endeavored to make up for the lack of textbooks by lessons in the Natural Sciences and in such other branches of study as seemed adapted to the requirements of my pupils. After a few weeks one of

my pupils, son of a Baptist minister, was taken out of school. His father being interviewed stated that he was sorry to have the boy lose his education, but could not afford to permit him to be converted to infidelity. What the boy had learned which disturbed his father was that the earth was round.

The subject provoked widespread discussion, and finally resulted in a joint debate between two school teachers and two Baptist preachers on the question:

"*Resolved*, That the earth is flat and stationary, and that the sun moves around it once in twenty-four hours."

At early candle-lighting on two successive Friday evenings this question was debated. On each night the procedure was the same. Each of the speakers spoke forty-five minutes, and each of the leaders spent a half-hour in rebuttal, a total of four hours each evening of solid oratory. I should like to relate, but it would unduly extend this narrative, the learned arguments of the two college students who stood for the rotundity of the earth, and how those arguments were met. I well remember the closing argument of my chief opponent, not the local preacher but an abler man whom he brought in, the cousin of a Confederate General of the same name (though himself a stanch Union man) who stood beside and above me with long descending gestures that threatened to crush my skull as he shouted:

"He's a college student-ah! And he's come out here to larn us and instruct us about the shape of the yarth-ah! And he knows more'n Joshua-ah! And he'd take Joshua into this here school and tell him he didn't know what he'd ort to pray for-ah! He'd tell Joshua that he hadn't orter said, 'Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon-ah, and thou moon in the valley of Ajalon-

ah!' He'd tell Joshua that he'd ort to have prayed, 'Yarth, stand thou still upon thine axle-tree-ah!' But I reckon God knowed what Joshua had ort to have prayed for, for it is written in the Word of God that the sun stood still-ah! I tell ye, brethering, hit's the doctrine of infidelity-ah! And any man that teaches it ort to be drove out of the country-ah!"

There is much more of the story, but this must suffice to illustrate an important point. Until he went to live in Springfield, Abraham Lincoln probably never had heard a Baptist preacher, unless it was John Mason Peck on some errand to Vandalia, who did not believe the earth flat, and who would not have classified Abraham Lincoln as an infidel for denying the declaration.

Now, I knew that I was not an infidel, even though I parted company with my friends in the Baptist ministry in my belief that the earth was round, and even though I had a similar debate with a well-informed Methodist preacher on the length of time that was required to make the earth. But Abraham Lincoln did not know. Thomas Paine and the preachers were agreed in their misinformation.

I count it a privilege to have lived with earnest and intelligent people who believed the earth flat, and to whom that belief was an important article of Christian faith. But I saw intelligent young men who had come to another opinion concerning some of these matters who accepted without protest the names that overzealous mountain preachers applied to them, and who, believing themselves to be infidels, in time became so.

Not many of Lincoln's biographers, if indeed any of them, have shared these advantages which for several profitable years I had in the mountains of

Kentucky and Tennessee; and I am less ready than some of even the most orthodox of them have been to accept the declaration that when Lincoln left New Salem he was an infidel. Even if I knew that he thought himself to be such, I should like before forming my final conclusion to know just what he thought constituted an infidel. I do not think that at this period of his history Abraham Lincoln possessed an adequate knowledge of the subject to have been altogether competent to classify himself.

A few things we know about him. He had established a reputation for courage, for kindness, and for honesty. "Honest Abe" was his sobriquet, and he deserved it. Whatever his opinions, he held them honestly; and neither on earth nor in heaven can any man be rightfully condemned for the holding of an honest opinion.

We shall have occasion later to refer to Mentor Graham, and to quote him. He came into Lincoln's life at this time, and taught him Kirkham's Grammar, and the study of surveying, and assisted him with his literary composition. He knew more of the mind of Abraham Lincoln during this period than any other man, and we shall hear from him in due time.

New Salem "winked out," as Lincoln was accustomed to say. It disappeared from the map. The post-office was discontinued. There was nothing to hold Lincoln there. But the great city of Springfield, with its one thousand inhabitants and its majestic pride in its new State Capitol, which Lincoln had done much to remove thither from Vandalia, beckoned to this ambitious young lawyer and politician, and on March 15, 1837, he borrowed a horse, rode to Springfield with all his worldly goods in his saddlebags, and the saddlebags none too full, and

thereafter became a resident of the capital city of Illinois, and a permanent factor in its legal and political life.

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Lincoln arrived in New Salem on April 19, 1831, a tall, lank flatboat hand, with his trousers rolled up "about five feet," and he left it on a borrowed horse with all his belongings in a pair of saddlebags, March 15, 1837. So far as worldly wealth was concerned, he was richer when he arrived at the age of twenty-two than when he left at the age of twenty-eight, for he was heavily in debt. It had fared better with him financially had he spent those six years in Illinois College at Jacksonville. He might have entered Springfield at the same time with a college diploma and a smaller debt. A college education was not impossible for him, and he might have had it had he cared for it as much as did the Green brothers or the brother of Ann Rutledge, or, among his later associates, Shelby M. Collum or Newton Bateman. It is a fair question whether an education under such good and great men as Julian M. Sturtevant and Edward Beecher would have been more or less valuable than what he actually got; in any event, it was not an impossibility if he had cared as much for it as did some other boys as poor as he.

But New Salem was his *alma mater*, as Mrs. Atkinson has aptly termed it, and there he got what had to stand as the equivalent of his academic course.

To have seen him entering New Salem on a flatboat and leaving it on a borrowed horse, one might easily have arrived at very erroneous conclusions as to what the six years had done for him. But the years were not lost.

He came to New Salem a strong pioneer, proud of his great height, and he always remained almost childishly proud of it, and ready to challenge any other tall man to back up to him and discover which was the taller. He was capable of hard work, and disinclined to perform it. Thomas Lincoln had taught him to work, but not to love work; and his employers declared that he loved labor far less than his meals and pay. If he must work, he preferred almost any kind of work rather than that of the farm, and he had welcomed the brief experiences of the river and had serious thoughts of being a blacksmith. He had prized his great strength less for the labor he might perform than for the supremacy which it gave him in physical contests; and it had made him the admired leader of the local wrestlers and the idol of the Clary Grove gang.

He had come to New Salem able to read, and to make what he called "rabbit tracks" as clerk on election day, assisting Mentor Graham, who rewarded him many fold in what he later taught to the young giant. He left New Salem a competent surveyor, a member of the bar, a representative in the Legislature, and, he might have called himself Captain, if he had chosen to do so, or even taken advantage of the frontier's ready system of post-bellum promotions and acquired higher rank as an officer who had seen actual military service. He had the good sense not to do this, and about the only commendable thing in his one important speech in Congress in later years was his mirthful description of his own military performance.

He had learned to think, to compose reasonably good English, to stand on his feet and debate. He had learned to measure his intellectual strength against

that of other men, and to come out ahead at least part of the time. He was possessed of almost inordinate ambition, and had no false notion that in his case the office was to seek the man;[17] he was more than ready for any office that would support him, enable him to reduce his "national debt," and advance him toward something higher. He was entering the profession of the law, but law was to him as yet a means to an end, and that end was office. Politics was the vocation and law the avocation in a large percentage of the law offices in Illinois and other new States; and Lincoln was a politician long before he was a lawyer.

His residence in New Salem had tested his moral character and confirmed his personal habits. He did not drink nor swear nor use tobacco.

In a state of society such as then existed, there was almost nothing which such a young man might not have aspired to, and Lincoln had high self-esteem and large aspiration. From this distance we see him leaving New Salem to "wink out" while he rode his borrowed steed far beyond Springfield, to tether him at last where Thomas Jefferson is alleged to have hitched his horse, to the palings of the White House.

But it was no exultant mood which possessed the soul of Lincoln as he turned his back upon his *alma mater* and went forth to conquer the world. He was a briefless lawyer, and bedless as well as briefless. He had met and mastered men, but had become painfully aware of his own poverty, his lack of education, his utter ignorance of the usages of even such polite society as had been in New Salem, to say nothing of that in Springfield.

He was unsettled in love and unsettled in religion, though he had been on speaking terms with both. He

had loved and lost Ann Rutledge, and he did not love Mary Owens and could not lose her. He was about to begin one of the loneliest periods of his very lonely life. For a year only one woman in Springfield spoke to him, and she would rather not have done so. He did not go to church nor mingle in society, but faced the hard and bitter problems that confronted him in earning a living, making some small payments on his debt, settling his relations with Mary Owens, and possibly giving some thought to his soul. But this was not a time of one of his spiritual high water-marks.

If we had seen Abraham Lincoln as he entered New Salem and again six years later as he left it, we should have found small reason to anticipate very much of what afterward occurred. But looking back upon him in the light of what occurred afterward, we discern the "promise and potency" of the great man he afterward became in the sad young man who already had become a leader of men, and had earned the right to be called "Honest Abe."

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CHAPTER V

THE ENVIRONMENT OF LINCOLN'S LIFE IN SPRINGFIELD

ABRAHAM LINCOLN became a resident of Springfield on Wednesday, March 15, 1837, and continued to live there until his removal, Saturday, February 11, 1860, to assume his duties as President of the United States. He was accepted as partner by his friend and former commander, Major John T. Stuart, and shared an office in which politics was the major interest and law was incidentally practiced. His partnership with Stuart continued for four years, from April 27, 1837, until April 14, 1841. His next partnership was with Judge Stephen T. Logan, and extended from April 14, 1841, to September 20, 1843.

He then formed a partnership with William H. Herndon which began on the day of the dissolution of the partnership with Judge Logan and was never formally dissolved. Lincoln had a working alliance with some lawyer in almost every county seat which he habitually visited, whereby the local lawyer secured the cases and worked them up, and Lincoln took them in charge as senior counsel when they came to trial.[18] These were not formal partnerships, though they were often so spoken of. This method gave him a large practice, and brought him into contact and collision with the ablest lawyers in central and southern Illinois.

In 1838 and again in 1840 he was re-elected to the Legislature, and showed little of the ability which he

later manifested, but was a faithful member, and he flung himself with ardor into the noisy campaign of 1840.

In 1842 he had his "duel" with James T. Shields, and later had the good sense to be ashamed of it.

In 1846 he ran for Congress, and at this third attempt was elected, taking his seat December 6, 1847, and continuing for two years.

The slavery issue was becoming dominant. Lincoln was not at the outset an abolitionist, and was unwilling to be placed in a position where he would be compelled to imperil his political chances by taking too definite a stand on this divisive measure; but on March 3, 1837, he introduced into the Legislature a vigorous protest against the aggressions of the pro-slavery party, a protest which probably failed to affect his political future because it contained only one signature beside his own. Only a few months later occurred the martyrdom of Owen Lovejoy at Alton, and the slavery issue was no longer one to be kept in the background. It is good to be able to remember that Lincoln's first protest against it was recorded before it had become so burning an issue. He himself dated his hostility to slavery to what he saw of a slave market in New Orleans when he visited that city as a boat hand. But he was unable to remember a time when he had not believed that slavery was wrong.

On other moral questions he now began to speak. He delivered an address on Temperance on Washington's Birthday in 1842. His first notable oratorical flight outside the spheres of politics and law was delivered before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield on January 27, 1837, and was on "The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions." It took him longer to say it

than it did at Gettysburg, and it was not so well said, but the rather florid lecture was intended to mean essentially the same thing which he later expressed much more simply and effectively.

His most important case that had a bearing on the slavery issue was that of Bailey *vs.* Cromwell, when he was thirty-two years of age. In preparing to argue before the Supreme Court of Illinois in favor of the freedom of a slave girl, he learned the legal aspects of the question which later he was to decide on its military and ethical character.

In 1858 he was an unsuccessful candidate for the United States Senate against Stephen A. Douglas, and conducted that series of debates which made him known throughout the nation as the champion of freedom in the territories, and of the faith that the nation could not forever endure half slave and half free. In the autumn of 1859 he visited Kansas, and was hailed as the friend of freedom.

On Tuesday evening, February 27, 1860, he delivered an address in Cooper Union in New York City, an address which greatly extended his fame. On the preceding Sunday he attended Plymouth Church and heard and met Henry Ward Beecher.

On May 16, 1860, he was nominated for the Presidency of the United States by a great convention meeting in a temporary structure known as "the Wigwam" standing on Lake and Market Streets near the junction of the two branches of Chicago River. On November 7, 1860, he was elected President.

On Friday, November 4, 1842, he was married to Miss Mary Todd. She was born in Lexington, Kentucky, December 13, 1818, and had come to Springfield to be with her sister, Mrs. Ninian W.

Edwards, in whose home the marriage occurred. Concerning this marriage and the events which went before and after, much has been written and nothing need here be repeated.

When Lincoln arrived in Springfield, he found himself for the first time in his life living in a town with churches that held service every Sunday, and each church under the care of its own minister. Springfield had several churches, and he did not at first attend any of them. This does not seem to have been on account of any hostility which he entertained toward them, but his first months in Springfield were months of great loneliness and depression. He was keenly conscious of his poverty and of his social disqualifications. He was still tortured by his unhappy love affair with Mary Owens. More than a year after his arrival in Springfield he wrote to her that he had not yet attended church and giving as the reason that he would not know how to behave himself:

> "This thing of living in Springfield is rather a dull business, after all; at least, it is so to me. I am quite as lonesome here as I ever was anywhere in my life. I have been spoken to by but one woman since I have been here, and should not have been by her if she could have avoided it. I have never been to church yet, nor probably shall not be soon. I stay away because I am conscious I should not know how to behave myself. I am often thinking about what we said of your coming to live at Springfield. I am afraid you

> would not be satisfied. There is a great deal of flourishing about in carriages here, which it would be your doom to see without sharing it. You would have to be poor, without the means of hiding your poverty."

Lincoln's habit with respect to churchgoing underwent no very marked improvement after his marriage until the year 1850. He came, however, to know a number of ministers[19] and to sustain somewhat pleasant relations with some of them.

Mary Todd had been reared a Presbyterian. For a time after her marriage she attended and was a member of the Episcopal Church. On February 1, 1850,[20] their second son, Edward Baker Lincoln, died. The little boy was between three and four years old. The rector of the Episcopal Church was absent from the city and the funeral service was conducted by Rev. James Smith, D.D., of the First Presbyterian Church. A friendship was established between them, and Mr. Lincoln took a pew in Dr. Smith's church and he and Mrs. Lincoln attended there regularly.

In a later chapter we shall have occasion to consider more directly and at length the influence of Dr. Smith upon Mr. Lincoln. We now confine ourselves to the fact that Lincoln now became a church attendant under the ministry of a preacher quite different from any he had previously known.

James Smith was a large and stalwart Scotchman. He is described as Websterian in appearance and in the strength of logical argument. Lamon speaks of him in contemptuous phrase which reflects little credit upon Lamon, describing him as a man of slender ability. Whatever Dr. Smith was, he was not a man of

meager intellectual power. He had a massive mind and one well trained. He had a voice of great carrying power and was accustomed to speaking to large congregations both indoors and out. He was a wide reader and a skilled controversialist. In his own young manhood he had been a deist, and when he was converted he entered with great ardor into various discussions with men who opposed the Christian faith. One such discussion he had engaged in with a widely known infidel author. The debate had continued evening after evening in a Southern city for nearly three weeks and Dr. Smith had emerged from it triumphant.

Dr. Smith was just the kind of man to win the admiration of Lincoln at that time. There is some reason to believe that Dr. Smith's three weeks' debate with C. G. Olmsted at Columbus, Mississippi, suggested to Lincoln the idea of his debate with Stephen A. Douglas.

That Lincoln's views underwent some change at this time there is the best reason to believe. Lincoln himself declared to his brother-in-law, Ninian W. Edwards, that his views had been modified.

Lamon and Herndon both seek to represent Dr. Smith as an officious, self-advertising meddler, who sought to win renown for himself by proclaiming Mr. Lincoln's conversion through his personal influence. The claims and conduct of Dr. Smith do not seem to merit any such rebuke. Whatever Dr. Smith claimed, Mr. Lincoln knew about it and was not offended by it. Subsequently he appointed Dr. Smith's son United States Consul to Dundee, Scotland, and on the son's return to the United States Mr. Lincoln appointed his father, who by that time had retired from the ministry, to succeed him in that position. Even

Lamon is compelled to admit that Dr. Smith's claims were made with Mr. Lincoln's knowledge, and says:

> "Mr. Lincoln permitted himself to be misunderstood and misrepresented by some enthusiastic ministers and exhorters with whom he came in contact. Among these was the Rev. Mr. Smith, then pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, and afterward consul at Dundee, in Scotland, under Mr. Lincoln's appointment."—LAMON, *Life of Lincoln*, p. 498.

This statement is thoroughly discreditable, and that which follows in Lamon's account of Mr. Lincoln's relations with Dr. Smith is a thorough misrepresentation, as we shall later discover. Lamon was not a deliberate liar; neither was he in this matter free from prejudice; and he wrote with reckless disregard of some facts which he did not know but ought to have known, and which the reader of this book shall know.

About this time Mr. Lincoln received word that his own father was dying, and was prevented from making him a personal visit, which, apparently, he was not wholly sorry for. On January 12, 1851, he wrote to his stepbrother, John D. Johnson:

> "I sincerely hope father may recover his health, but, tell him to remember to call upon and confide in our great and good and merciful Maker, who will not turn away from him in any extremity. He notes the fall of a

> sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our head, and He will not forget the dying man who puts his trust in Him. Say to him that if we could meet now it is doubtful whether it would not be more painful than pleasant, but that if it be his lot to go now, he will soon have a joyous meeting with many loved ones gone before, and where the rest of us, through the help of God, hope ere long to join them."

Even Herndon grew indignant when anyone attempted to explain away that letter, or to make it seem anything less than it purported to be. He said in his letter to Mr. Abbott, under date of February 18, 1870:

> "It has been said to me that Mr. Lincoln wrote the above letter to an old man simply to cheer him up in his last moments, and that the writer did not believe what he said. The question is, Was Mr. Lincoln an honest and truthful man? If he was, he wrote that letter honestly, believing it. It has to me the sound, the ring, of an honest utterance. I admit that Mr. Lincoln, in his moments of melancholy and terrible gloom, was living on the border land between theism and atheism, sometimes quite wholly dwelling in atheism. In his happier moments he would swing back to theism, and dwell lovingly there.... So it seems to

> me that Mr. Lincoln believed in God and immortality as well as heaven—a place."—LAMON, p. 495.

Another incident comes to us from this period and is related by Captain Gilbert J. Greene. He was a young printer living in Springfield, and at the time of this incident was eighteen years of age. Whether the story was in any way exaggerated we may not certainly know, but it is here given as he himself furnished it for publication and is now printed with one or two other Lincoln stories in a small volume in limited edition:

> "'Greene,' said Lincoln to him one day on the streets of Springfield, 'I've got to ride out into the country tomorrow to draw a will for a woman who is believed to be on her deathbed. I may want you for a witness. If you haven't anything else to do I'd like to have you go along.'
>
> "The invitation was promptly accepted.
>
> "On the way to the farmhouse the lawyer and the printer chatted delightfully, cementing a friendship that was fast ripening into real affection. Arriving at the house, the woman was found to be near her end.
>
> "With great gentleness Lincoln drew up the document disposing of the property as the woman desired. Neighbors and relatives were

present, making it unnecessary to call on Greene to witness the instrument. After the signing and witnessing of the will the woman turned to Lincoln and said, with a smile:

"'Now I have my affairs for this world arranged satisfactorily. I am thankful to say that long before this I have made preparation for the other life I am so soon to enter. Many years ago I sought and found Christ as my Saviour. He has been my stay and comfort through the years, and is now near to carry me over the river of death. I do not fear death, Mr. Lincoln. I am really glad that my time has come, for loved ones have gone before me and I rejoice in the hope of meeting them so soon.'

"Instinctively the friends drew nearer the bedside. As the dying woman had addressed her words more directly to Lincoln than to the others, Lincoln, evincing sympathy in every look and gesture, bent toward her and said:

"'Your faith in Christ is wise and strong; your hope of a future life is blessed. You are to be congratulated in passing through life so usefully, and into the life beyond so hopefully.'

"'Mr. Lincoln,' said she, 'won't you

read a few verses out of the Bible for me?'

"A member of the family offered him the family Bible. Instead of taking it, he began reciting from memory the twenty-third Psalm, laying emphasis upon 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.' Still without referring to the Bible, Lincoln began with the first part of the fourteenth chapter of John:

"'Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.

"'In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

"'And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.'

"After he had given these and other quotations from the Scriptures, he recited various familiar comforting hymns, closing with 'Rock of Ages, cleft for me.' Then, with a tenderness and pathos that enthralled everyone in the room, he spoke the last stanza —

"'*While I draw this fleeting*

breath,

When mine eyes shall close in death,

When I rise to worlds unknown,

See Thee on Thy judgment throne,

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee.'

"While Lincoln was reciting this stanza a look of peace and resignation lit up the countenance of the dying woman. In a few minutes more, while the lawyer and the printer were there, she passed away.

"The journey back to Springfield was begun in silence. It was the younger man who finally said:

"'Mr. Lincoln, ever since what has just happened back there in the farmhouse, I have been thinking that it is very extraordinary that you should so perfectly have acted as pastor as well as attorney.'

"When the answer to this suggestion finally was given—and it was not given at once—Lincoln said:

"'God, and Eternity, and Heaven were very near to me today.'"—

CHARLES T. WHITE, *Lincoln the Comforter*, pp. 11-16.

Reference should be made in our review of this period to Lincoln's stories as exhibiting an important phase of his character.

It is not easy to decide what stories actually were Lincoln's. Very few of them are to be found in their original setting, for he did not commonly tell stories when he made speeches. They were told in personal interviews, in hours of recreation, and especially in taverns and other loafing places. The period of their greatest vogue was that in which Lincoln traveled the circuit. Most of the successful lawyers of that day were story-tellers; and in the evenings of court-week they swapped yarns with local wits. Lincoln was the most famous of a considerable group of noted Illinois story-tellers.

During his lifetime he was asked about how many of the stories attributed to him were his own, and he said he thought about half. A much larger discount would need to be made now. Many such stories Lincoln probably never heard.

The stories which lawyers told to each other and to groups of men were not all of them overnice; and Lincoln's stories were like the rest. He did not always confine himself to strictly proper stories. But in those that are authentic and not quite proper, it is to be observed that the coarseness was incidental to the real point of the story. I have not heard any story, authenticated as Lincoln's, which is actually obscene.

It has been my privilege to examine a considerable quantity of unpublished writing of Lincoln's, including some manuscripts that have been withheld for the reason that they were not quite proper. Of

these I can say that they are few in number, and that the element of vulgarity is very small. Excepting only the "First Chronicles of Reuben," which was a rude backwoods joke, written in his boyhood, and in full accord with the standards of humor current in the time and general environment, there is not very much that one could wish had been destroyed.

The frankest piece of questionable literature from Lincoln's pen in mature years, so far as I am aware, is in a private collection, and its owner does not permit it to be copied. Not many people are permitted to see it. It is probably the least attractive scrap of Lincoln's writing extant that dates from his mature years. It is undated, but belongs to the period of his life on the circuit. It is a piece of extravagant nonsense, written in about twenty lines on a quarter sheet of legal cap, and is probably the effort to recall and record something that he had heard and which amused him. Its whole point is in the transposition of the initial letters of compound words, or words in juxtaposition in a sentence, such as a speaker sometimes makes in a moment of mental confusion. Thus a cotton-patch is a "potten-catch" and a fence-corner is a "cence-forner." Every clause contains one or more of these absurdities, until a sense of boisterous mirth is awakened at the possibility that there should be so many of them. Most of them are harmless as the two above quoted, but there are two or three that are not in good taste. They are not vile nor obscene, but not very pretty. Lincoln wasted ten minutes of spare time in writing out this rather ingenious bit of nonsense, and it is not worth more than that length of discussion. It is probably the worst bit of extant writing of Lincoln's mature years, written in the period of his circuit-riding, and it has little to commend it and not a great deal to condemn.

Lincoln's religious life in Springfield has been and is the subject of violent controversy. Much that has been written on both sides bears the marks of prejudice and exhibits internal evidence of having been consciously or unconsciously distorted. In a later chapter it will come before us for review and analysis. Of it we may now remind ourselves that in this period covering nearly a quarter of a century Lincoln was developing in many ways. He emerged from grinding poverty into a condition in which he owned a home and had a modest sum of money in the bank. From an ill-trained fledgling lawyer, compelled by his poverty to share a bed in a friend's room above the store, he had come to be a leader at the Illinois bar. From an obscure figure in State politics he had come to be the recognized leader of a political party that was destined to achieve national success and to determine the policies of the nation with little interruption for more than half a century. Out of a condition of great mental uncertainty in all matters relating to domestic relations he had come into a settled condition as the husband of a brilliant and ambitious woman and the father of a family of sons to whom he was devotedly attached. For the first time in his life he lived in a community where there were buildings wholly dedicated to the purposes of public worship; and after a considerable period of non-church attendance, and perhaps another of infrequent or irregular attendance, he had become a regular attendant and supporter of a church whose minister was his personal friend and whom he greatly admired.

During his years in Springfield, Mr. Lincoln's political ideals had undergone marked change. His experience in the Illinois Legislature is not discreditable; neither does it manifest any notably high ideals. Nor was he

brilliantly successful in his one term in Congress. Lincoln was an honest politician, in the sense that he kept his promises and stood by his announced convictions. But it is impossible to read into his legislative history any such lofty purpose as later possessed him. He and the other members of the "Long Nine" log-rolled in orthodox political fashion, and won from Governor Ford the title "spared monuments of popular wrath."[21]

As a jury lawyer, also, his arts were those of the successful trial lawyer of the period. So far as the author has been able to find, there was no unworthy chapter in all this long history. The story, for instance, that in the trial of Armstrong Lincoln used an almanac of another year and won his case by fraud, has, as the author is convinced, no foundation whatever in fact. On the contrary, Lincoln was at a serious disadvantage in any case in whose justice he did not fully believe.

But there came a time when Lincoln was more than a shrewd and honest politician; more than a successful jury lawyer. In the brief autobiographical sketch which he prepared for Mr. Fell, he speaks of his work at the end of his term in Congress, and says:

> "In 1846 I was once elected to the lower House of Congress. Was not a candidate for re-election. From 1849 to 1854, both inclusive, practiced law more assiduously than ever before. Always a Whig in politics, and generally on the Whig electoral tickets, making active canvasses, I was losing interest in politics when the repeal of the Missouri

> Compromise aroused me again. What I have done since is pretty well known."

He expanded this brief statement somewhat in the sketch which he furnished a little later to Scripps as a basis of his campaign biography:

> "Upon his return from Congress, he went to the practice of the law with greater earnestness than ever before.... In 1854 his profession had almost superseded the thought of politics in his mind, when the repeal of the Missouri Compromise aroused him as he had never been before."

The full effect of this unprecedented arousing was manifest in his speech at Springfield on June 16, 1858, the "House-Divided-Against-Itself" speech.

Lincoln himself is our authority for the statement that the moral aspects of the slavery issue called him back into politics and roused him as he never before had been aroused. Politically, at least, Abraham Lincoln had been born again. Nor had it been a period of spiritual inaction or retrogression, as we have seen and shall see yet further.

In addition to all this he had known the discipline of sorrow, and had had occasion to test religion on the practical side of its availability for comfort in time of bereavement. He had now been chosen to a position of responsibility such as no man in all the history of his nation had ever been called upon to occupy.

On the day before he was fifty-two years old he stood upon the platform of a railroad train ready to leave

Springfield for the last time. He did not know that it was the last time, but he had a haunting presentiment that it might be so. With tears filling his eyes and in a voice choked with emotion he spoke his last words to his neighbors and friends. Just what he said we shall never know. A shorthand reporter endeavored to write it down, but with indifferent success. Hon. Newton Bateman, State Superintendent of Schools, of whom we shall hear later, hurried to his office after the train pulled out and wrote down what, judged by any reasonable test, must be considered a very satisfactory report of it. Lincoln sat down in the train after it had left Springfield and endeavored to recall the exact language which he had used, and in this was assisted by his private secretary, John Hay. Of these three, and a considerable number of other versions, the Illinois Historical Society has chosen the third as the authentic version. It represents what Lincoln wished to be remembered as having said, and very nearly what he actually did say. This version of his farewell address, representing the deep feeling of his heart at the hour of parting, and recorded on the same day as embodying his deliberate revision of the extempore utterance, is taken from Nicolay and Hay's edition of his Life and of his Works. It is that which was cast in bronze and placed in the year of his Centennial, in front of the State House at Springfield. If one would measure the growth of Abraham Lincoln intellectually and spiritually he might ask, What kind of an address in comparison with this Lincoln might have delivered on his departure from Kentucky in 1816, from Indiana in 1830, or from New Salem in 1837? The answer is so emphatic as almost to make the question absurd; but it is worth while to ask the question before we read again the familiar words of

his farewell address. No one reading these few sentences can question the sincerity of Lincoln's utterance or the depth of his religious feeling:

> "My friends: No one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a youth to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with the task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him I cannot succeed. With that assistance, I cannot fail. Trusting in Him, who can go with me, and remain with you and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell."—NICOLAY AND HAY, III, 291.

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CHAPTER VI

THE ENVIRONMENT OF LINCOLN'S LIFE IN WASHINGTON

ABRAHAM LINCOLN was inaugurated sixteenth president of the United States, on Monday, March 4, 1861. His journey to Washington had served to impress him even more deeply than before with a sense of the solemnity of his task. He still was earnestly hoping, and if we may judge from his speeches along the route, even expecting, that war would be averted;[22] but the possibility of war was always apparent and its probability was growing daily more certain.

Several incidents are related tending to show the solemnity of Lincoln's feeling at this time. Some of them are plainly apocryphal, but others are deeply significant. The following was related by Rev. Dr. Miner, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Springfield, who was intimately acquainted with the Lincoln family and who visited them in the White House. This story he declared was related to him by Mrs. Lincoln on the occasion of his visit to the White House and was published while Mrs. Lincoln was still living. It appears to rest upon a sound basis of fact:

> "Here I relate an incident which occurred on the 4th of March, 1861, as told me by Mrs. Lincoln. Said she:
>
> "'Mr. Lincoln wrote the conclusion of his inaugural address the morning it

> was delivered. The family being present, he read it to them. He then said he wished to be left alone for a short time. The family retired to an adjoining room, but not so far distant but that the voice of prayer could be distinctly heard. There, closeted with God alone, surrounded by the enemies who were ready to take his life, he commended his country's cause and all dear to him to God's providential care, and with a mind calmed by communion with his Father in heaven, and courage equal to the danger, he came forth from that retirement ready for duty.'"—*Scribner's Monthly*, 1873, p. 343.

Fort Sumter fell April 13, and on the 15th Lincoln issued his call for volunteers, and called Congress in extraordinary session for July 4. On July 21 occurred the battle of Bull Run, and the war settled down to its weary and varying fortunes. On September 22, 1862, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation to take effect January 1, 1863. The battle of Gettysburg occurred July 1-4, 1863, and destroyed the hope of the Southern Army of a successful invasion of the North. Simultaneously with Lee's defeat at Gettysburg, General Grant captured Vicksburg, opening the Mississippi to the Union gunboats. On November 19, 1863, Lincoln delivered his Gettysburg address. On March 4, 1865, he was inaugurated President a second time. On Sunday, April 9, 1865, General Lee surrendered his army at Appomattox. On Friday night, April 14, at 10:20 P.M., Abraham

Lincoln was shot in Ford's Theater and died on Saturday morning, April 15, at 7:22. On Thursday, May 4, his body was interred at Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield.

During his residence in Washington, Mr. Lincoln habitually attended the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church. He was a warm personal friend of the pastor, Rev. Phineas D. Gurley, D.D., whose grandson, Captain Gurley of the War Department, relates that Lincoln sat with Dr. Gurley on the rear porch of the White House during the second battle of Bull Run, and when the strain had become almost unbearable he knelt in prayer and Mr. Lincoln knelt beside him and joined reverently in the petition. Dr. Gurley's testimonies to the religious development of Lincoln's life were conservative, and bear upon their face marks of trustworthiness. There are no extravagant claims; no florid and declamatory theological affirmations,[23] but such as this which Dr. Gurley remembers to have heard Lincoln say to a company of clergymen calling upon him in one of the darkest times in the Civil War:

> "My hope of success in this struggle rests on that immutable foundation, the justness and the goodness of God; and when events are very threatening I still hope that in some way all will be well in the end, because our cause is just and God will be on our side."—*Scribner's Magazine*, 1873, p. 339.

Lincoln sometimes varied this form of expression and said that he was less anxious to proclaim that God was on his side than he was to be sure that he was

on God's side.

During this period Lincoln had frequent occasion to meet delegations from religious bodies and to reply to their addresses. We shall have occasion later to consider some of his words to these different religious bodies. He also issued a number of proclamations, calling for days of fasting and prayer and days of thanksgiving, in which he expressed not only the formal sentiment which he might assume represented the mind of the people, but also to a considerable extent what must have been his own religious conviction.

An unbiased reading of these proclamations and addresses compels the reader to recognize in them, not merely the formal courtesy of an official to the representatives of large and influential bodies, but the sincere expression of his own faith. An illustration may be found in his attitude toward the Quakers. No religious body suffered more during the Civil War, and with no religious fellowship did Mr. Lincoln feel a more instinctive sympathy, though he was compelled by the logic of events to pursue courses of action in contravention of their desires and at times of their convictions.

In September, 1862, he received a delegation of Friends, and listened to an address on their behalf by Mrs. Eliza P. Gurney, wife of Joseph John Gurney, a wealthy banker, entreating him on behalf of their peace-loving organization to bring the war to a speedy end. He could not do what they wished, and moreover, he believed that it was not the will of God that the war should end till it had wrought out the purposes of the Divine will. He said:

"I am glad of this interview, and glad

> to know that I have your sympathy and prayers. We are indeed going through a great trial—a fiery trial. In the very responsible position in which I happen to be placed, being a humble instrument in the hands of our Heavenly Father, as I am, and as we all are, to work out His great purposes, I have desired that all my works and acts may be according to His will, and that it might be so, I have sought His aid; but if, after endeavoring to do my best in the light which He affords me, I find my efforts fail, I must believe that for some purpose unknown to me, He wills it otherwise. If I had had my way, this war would never have been commenced. If I had been allowed my way, this war would have been ended before this; but we find it still continues, and we must believe that He permits it for some wise purpose of His own, mysterious and unknown to us; and though with our limited understandings we may not be able to comprehend it, yet we cannot but believe that He who made the world still governs it."

We are not permitted to believe that on this and similar occasions Mr. Lincoln met the situation with words of pious evasion, or that what he said was simply what he thought he might be expected to say. Some months after this interview Mrs. Gurney, being then in London, wrote to Mr. Lincoln. He could

easily have acknowledged the letter without committing himself to any religious expression. For several months he kept the letter, and then, on September 4, 1864, he wrote to her as follows:

> "My esteemed Friend: I have not forgotten—probably never shall forget—the very impressive occasion when yourself and friends visited me on a Sabbath forenoon two years ago. Nor has your kind letter, written nearly a year later, ever been forgotten. In all it has been your purpose to strengthen my reliance on God. I am much indebted to the good Christian people of the country for their constant prayers and consolations; and to no one of them more than to yourself. The purposes of the Almighty are perfect, and must prevail, though we erring mortals may fail to accurately perceive them in advance. We hoped for a happy termination of this terrible war long before this; but God knows best and ruled otherwise. We shall yet acknowledge His wisdom, and our own error therein. Meanwhile we must work earnestly in the best light He gives us, trusting that so working still conduces to the great ends He ordains. Surely He intends some great good to follow this mighty convulsion, which no mortal could make, and no mortal could stay. Your people, the Friends,

> have had, and are having, a very great trial. On principle and faith opposed to both war and oppression, they can only practically oppose oppression by war. In this hard dilemma some have chosen one horn, and some the other. For those appealing to me on conscientious grounds, I have done, and shall do, the best I could and can, in my own conscience, under my oath to the law. That you believe this, I doubt not, and believing it, I shall receive for my country and myself your earnest prayers to our Father in Heaven."

Of Lincoln's habit of public worship during his Presidency, Rev. William Henry Roberts, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian General Assembly, writes in a foreword to Dr. Johnson's book:

> "It was my privilege as a young man to have known Abraham Lincoln. Entering the service of the United States government in the fall of 1863, the first Sabbath of my sojourn in Washington City I went to the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church. When the time for the long prayer came, according to immemorial usage in many Presbyterian congregations, a number of the men stood up for prayer, and among those upright figures I noticed in particular that of the President of the United States. As

a member of the New York Avenue Church I was seated not far from Mr. Lincoln at Sunday services for a year and a half, and his attitude was always that of an earnest and devout worshiper. He was also an attendant at the weekly meeting, though for a considerable period taking part in the services privately. It having become known that he was an attendant at the prayer meeting, many persons would gather in or near the church at the close of the service in order to have access to him for various purposes. Desiring to put an end to these unwelcome interruptions, the Rev. Dr. Phineas D. Gurley, the pastor of Mr. Lincoln, arranged to have the President sit in the pastor's room, the door of which opened upon the lecture room, and there Mr. Lincoln would take a silent part in the service. He informed his pastor on several occasions that he had received great comfort from the meetings, and for the reason that they had been characterized more by prayer than by the making of addresses.

"Dr. Gurley bore repeated testimony to myself and to other members of the church of the deeply religious character of Mr. Lincoln, and it is with pleasure that I add this brief testimony from my own experience and observation.

> "It will be fifty years next fall since I came into direct touch with the man, who in the providence of God was the liberator of a race, and I shall always hold in sweet and blessed memory my first sight of him, as a devout worshiper standing for prayer in the sanctuary of the Most High."—*Abraham Lincoln the Christian*, pp. 13-15.

I have copied direct from the original letter, in possession of Mr. Jesse W. Weik, Nicolay's letter to Herndon affirming that, to the best of his knowledge, Lincoln's belief did not change during his years in the White House. It was addressed to Herndon, and it reads:

> "Executive Mansion,
> "Washington, May 27, 1865.
>
> "FRIEND HERNDON:—
>
> "I have this morning received your note of the 23rd inst. and reply at once.
>
> "Mr. Lincoln did not, to my knowledge, change in any way his religious views, beliefs, or opinions from the time he left Springfield to the day of his death. I do not know just what they were, never having heard him explain them in detail; but I am very sure he gave no outward indication of his mind having undergone any change in that regard while here.

"Very truly,

"JNO. G. NICOLAY.

"HON. WILLIAM H. HERNDON."

While Nicolay's declaration that Lincoln gave no outward indication that his views had undergone any change during his residence in the White House is entitled to great weight, it is not wholly conclusive. It is quite possible that Mr. Lincoln changed more than those who were closest to him every day realized, more, indeed, than he himself realized. Some men who had known him in earlier years and who met him from time to time while he was in the White House observed a change too subtle to be fully realized by those who saw him daily. Joshua Fry Speed knew Lincoln from the day Lincoln arrived in Springfield until his death. Indeed, he had known Lincoln earlier; but their intimate acquaintance began on the day when Lincoln received his law license and moved to Springfield, where he shared Speed's bed. Speed told of that incident frequently, how Lincoln came into his store, greatly depressed, asking to be permitted to purchase a single bed which he was not certain he could ever pay for; but Speed invited Lincoln to sleep with him in the room above the store. Lincoln carried his saddlebags upstairs and set them down, and came down the stairs with his countenance beaming, as he said, "Well, Speed, I've moved!" Lamon declares that Speed was "The most intimate friend Mr. Lincoln ever had at this or any other time" (*Life of Lincoln*, p. 231). Says Lamon: "He made to Speed the most confidential communications he ever made to mortal man. If he had on earth 'a bosom crony,' it was Speed, and that deep and abiding attachment subsisted unimpaired to the day of Lincoln's death."

To Speed alone Lincoln gave his full confidence in the matter of his love affairs, and they talked together as men seldom talk to each other. Speaking out of a most intimate knowledge, Speed wrote in his lecture on Lincoln:

> "I have often been asked what were Mr. Lincoln's religious opinions. When I knew him in early life, he was a skeptic. He had tried hard to be a believer, but his reason could not grasp and solve the great problem of redemption as taught. He was very cautious never to give expression to any thought or sentiment that would grate harshly upon a Christian ear. For a sincere Christian he had great respect. He often said that the most ambitious man might live to see every hope fail; but no Christian could live and see his hope fail, because fulfillment could only come when life ended. But this was a subject we never discussed. The only evidence I have of any change, was in the summer before he was killed. I was invited out to the Soldiers' Home to spend the night. As I entered the room, near night, he was sitting near a window intently reading his Bible. Approaching him I said, 'I am glad to see you so profitably engaged.' 'Yes,' said he, 'I am profitably engaged.' 'Well,' said I, 'if you have recovered from your skepticism, I am sorry to

> say that I have not.' Looking me earnestly in the face, and placing his hand on my shoulder, he said, 'You are wrong, Speed; take all of this Book upon reason that you can, and the balance on faith, and you will live and die a happier man.'"—SPEED: *Lecture on Abraham Lincoln*, pp. 32, 33.

The Bible which the colored people presented to Lincoln was kept and prized by him. Hon. H. C. Deming, in his address before the Legislature of Connecticut, just after Lincoln's death, referred to it:

> "The interview which I am recalling was last summer [1864] just after General Fremont had declined to run against him for the Presidency. The magnificent Bible, which the negroes of Washington[24] had just presented to him lay upon the table, and while we were both examining it, I recited the somewhat remarkable passage from the Chronicles, 'Eastward were six Levites, northward four a day, southward four a day, and toward Assuppim two and two. At Parbar westward, four at the causeway, and two at Parbar.'[25] He immediately challenged me to find any such passage as that in *his* Bible. After I had pointed it out to him, and he was satisfied of its genuineness, he asked me if I remembered the text which his friends had applied to Fremont, and instantly turned to a

> verse in the first of Samuel, put on his spectacles, and read in his slow, peculiar, and waggish tone,—'And everyone that was in distress and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.'"[26]

There are two interesting facts about this incident related by Representative Deming. One is that Lincoln knew his Bible well enough to challenge an unfamiliar passage and require that it be shown to him before believing that the Bible contained it. Only a man who had read his Bible much would have been so confident. The other is that this story recalled to Mr. Deming that very important declaration of Lincoln which is attested by a number of other credible witnesses in substance, but which Deming first gave to the world in his notable address:

> "I am here reminded of an impressive remark which he made to me upon another occasion, and which I shall never forget. He said, he had never united himself to any church, because he found difficulty in giving his assent, without mental reservations, to the long complicated statements of Christian doctrine which characterize their Articles of Belief and Confessions of Faith. 'When any church,' he continued, 'will inscribe over its altar as its sole

> qualification for membership the Saviour's condensed statement of the substance of both the law and Gospel, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself,—that church will I join with all my heart and soul.'"—*Eulogy upon Abraham Lincoln, before the General Assembly of Connecticut, 1865*, p. 42.

Henry C. Whitney knew Lincoln well, from the days of their circuit riding in Illinois till Lincoln's death. His testimony is valuable:

> "Mr. Lincoln was a fatalist: he believed, and often said, that
>
> '*There's a divinity that shapes*
> *our ends,*
>
> *Rough-hew them how we will,'*
>
> and as a corollary from this belief, that the Almighty controlled the affairs of men and made the wrath of men to praise Him. In all stages of his administration and before, commencing with his first public utterance after his election, he declared that with God's help he should succeed, and without it he would fail. Likewise, before he was run for the Presidency, he made frequent references to God in the

> same spirit of devoutness and trust; and, therefore, he was honest; honest with his Father on his dying bed, honest in what he feared was (and which proved to be) his last affectionate farewell to his neighbors, honest to the many eminent bands of clergymen and Christian people who visited him, and honest with his Cabinet in the most important consultation it ever held; then Lincoln, whether as man or as President, believed in God as the Ruler of the Universe, in a blessed hereafter, and in the efficacy of prayer. . . . Mr. Lincoln believed himself to be an instrument of God; and that, as God willed, so would the contest be. He also believed in prayer and its efficacy, and that God willed the destruction of slavery through his instrumentality, and he believed in the Church of God as an important auxiliary."—*Life on the Circuit with Lincoln*, pp. 267-68.

Among the men in Washington who best knew the mind of Abraham Lincoln was Schuyler Colfax, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and afterward Vice-President under General Grant. In his memorial address delivered just after the assassination, he paid a high tribute to the deep religious spirit of Lincoln as he knew it, and said:

> "Nor should I forget to mention that the last Act of Congress signed by him was one requiring that the

> motto, in which he sincerely believed, 'In God we trust' should hereafter be inscribed upon all our national coins."—HON. SCHUYLER COLFAX, in *Memorial Address in Chicago, April 30, 1865*.

During his residence in the White House Mr. Lincoln again met the discipline of personal bereavement. His son Willie died. There is conflict of testimony as to Mr. Lincoln's love for his wife, though the present writer believes that he truly loved her, but no one who knew him ever doubted his devotion to his children. The death of this little boy, William Wallace, who was born in Springfield, December 21, 1850, and died in the White House, February 20, 1862, seemed, according to the testimony of Mrs. Lincoln, to turn his thoughts more to religion. It must have recalled to him all that had occurred when his other boy died in Springfield, and it brought new and solemn thoughts and possibly convictions.

Moreover, he was now father to the boys of a nation. They were marching at his order, singing,

"*We are coming, Father Abraham,*

Six hundred thousand more."

They were laying down their young lives for a cause that he told them was holy. How he felt for the fathers and mothers of the land, his letter to Mrs. Bixby and his countless deeds of mercy testify. Again and again, as Ingersoll well said, he abused his great power on the side of mercy and never otherwise. The deepening sense of responsibility, as he affirmed, again and again drove him to his knees (Noah Brooks

in *Harper's Monthly* for July, 1885). Did he consciously change his theology? Very likely not; but he certainly became a more and more deeply religious man under the discipline of these experiences.

Perhaps more than all else, the moral aspects of the slavery question thrust themselves into a foremost place in his religious thinking. We need not trouble ourselves overmuch about the accuracy of John Hanks's story that when Lincoln saw slaves sold in the market in New Orleans he vowed to "hit that institution and hit it hard"; part of that story may have originated in John's fertile imagination. But the story is not an unworthy one, and we know from Lincoln's own declaration that on that very occasion he was smitten with a sense of the iniquity of slavery, and that on its moral rather than its political side. That he freed the slaves as a war measure, and that he must thus justify the action as an extra-constitutional prerogative, need not lessen in our mind the moral aspects of the decision. The evidence is incontestable, and we shall quote it later, that to him it was a solemn obligation, the fulfillment of a vow which he had made to God.

We are presently to go into a detailed examination of the available evidence concerning Lincoln's religious life. We are here considering his environment in the successive stages of his career, and his visible reaction to it. But even if we were to go no further, we should find ourselves compelled to believe in the reality of Lincoln's religion. We might not be able accurately to define it, and we may not be able to do so to our complete satisfaction after we have finished; we might even question, and we may still question, whether he himself ever fully defined it.

But we are assured that his religion was real and genuine, and that it grew more vital as he faced more completely the moral and spiritual aspects of the work to which, as he honestly believed, he was divinely called.

When General Lee surrendered his armies on April 9, 1865, Mr. Stanton, Secretary of War, though not a very religious man in his profession, felt with the whole nation the Providence of God in the result. He surrounded the dome of the Capitol with a transparency, reading, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes."

He believed it; the nation believed it; Abraham Lincoln believed it. That conviction that the hand of God had been in it all had but lately been expressed in his Second Inaugural. That faith was warm in his heart, and its expression fresh upon his lips, when on April 14, 1865, he was shot and killed.

So ended the earthly life of Abraham Lincoln; and with that end came the beginning of the discussion of his religion. To the history of that discussion, and the critical consideration of the evidence which it adduced, we are now to address ourselves.

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PART II: AN ANALYSIS OF THE EVIDENCE

CHAPTER VII

THE RULES OF EVIDENCE

THUS far we have dealt primarily with the environments of Lincoln's religious life. We have not been able to escape the conviction that Lincoln's religious life was an evolution, influenced by his environment and experience. We have considered in these successive chapters some matters in detail which seemed to belong particularly to the respective periods of which those chapters have treated; but we have reserved, in general, the evidence that bears upon his religion as a whole for more critical examination. Particularly have we reserved those portions of the evidence which, first published after his death, belong to no one epoch of his life and have become the occasion of controversy. What kind of man he was religiously in 1865 we shall hope to know better; indeed, it is not unreasonable to hope that examination may show in part the processes by which his religion found its final form and expression.

We know already that there had been a development. We know that the Abraham Lincoln who in 1834 delivered his political opinions in

labored and florid style and with the logic current in stump oratory had undergone mental development and had emerged into the Lincoln who delivered his thoughts in translucent Anglo-Saxon at Gettysburg and the Second Inaugural. That there had been a moral and spiritual development also we have already been assured. Perhaps it was greater than he himself consciously understood. We shall now endeavor to ascertain what it had come to be.

In this inquiry we have no easy task. The mass of evidence is great, and the contradictions are many. There were contradictions in the personality of the man himself, and many contradictions in the views which men, even honest and unprejudiced men, had of him; and not all the testimony is unprejudiced.

Lincoln was a man of many moods. He reacted differently to different stimuli, and to the same stimulus at different times. His feelings ran the gamut from abysmal dejection to rollicking gaiety: and he never revealed his whole nature to any one man, nor showed the whole of his nature at any one time. He cannot be judged by the mechanical tests of a rigid consistency: for he was not that kind of man.

When Dr. J. G. Holland went to Springfield immediately after the death of Lincoln to gather material for his biography he was surprised beyond measure to find how conflicting were the local judgments of Lincoln's character. Concerning this he wrote:

> "Such a nature and character seem full of contradictions; and a man who is subject to such transitions will always be a mystery to those who do not know him wholly. Thus

no two men among his intimate friends will agree concerning him.

"The writer has conversed with multitudes of men who claimed to know Mr. Lincoln intimately; yet there are not two of the whole number who agree in their estimate of him. The fact was that he rarely showed more than one aspect of himself to one man. He opened himself to men in different directions. It was rare that he exhibited what was religious in him; and he never did this at all, except when he found just the nature and character that were sympathetic with that aspect and element of his character. A great deal of his best, deepest, largest life he kept almost constantly from view, because he would not expose it to the eyes and apprehension of the careless multitude.

"To illustrate the effect of the peculiarity of Mr. Lincoln's intercourse with men, it may be said that men who knew him through all his professional and political life have offered opinions as diametrically opposite as these, viz.: that he was a very ambitious man, and that he was without a particle of ambition; that he was one of the saddest men that ever lived, and that he was one of the jolliest men that

ever lived; that he was very religious, but that he was not a Christian; that he was a Christian, but did not know it; that he was so far from being a religious man or a Christian that 'the less said upon the subject the better'; that he was the most cunning man in America, and that he had not a particle of cunning in him; that he had the strongest personal attachments, and that he had no personal attachments at all—only a general good feeling toward everybody; that he was a man of indomitable will, and that he was a man almost without a will; that he was a tyrant, and that he was the softest-hearted, most brotherly man that ever lived; that he was remarkable for his pure-mindedness, and that he was the foulest in his jests and stories of any man in the country; that he was a witty man, and that he was only a retailer of the wit of others; that his apparent candor and fairness were only apparent, and that they were as real as his head and his hands; that he was a boor, and that he was in all essential respects a gentleman; that he was a leader of the people, and that he was always led by the people; that he was cool and impassive, and that he was susceptible of the strongest passions. It is only by tracing these separate

> streams of impression back to their fountain that we are able to arrive at anything like a competent comprehension of the man, or to learn why he came to be held in such various estimation. Men caught only separate aspects of his character—only the fragments that were called into exhibition by their own qualities."—HOLLAND: *Life of Lincoln*, pp. 241-42.

Some writers, and more orators, have professed to see in the character of Lincoln a perfect balancing of all desirable qualities. Bishop Fowler, in what was perhaps the most widely popular of all popular orations on Lincoln, attributed his own inability to analyze the character of Lincoln to its perfect sphericity, a consistency such that any attempt to consider any quality by itself met the counterbalancing consideration of all the other qualities. But the antitheses in Lincoln's character were not those of a perfect consistency.[27] They were of a sort which puzzled those who knew him best, and were most easily explained by those who gave least study to the man himself and most to their own theories of what a man like Mr. Lincoln must have been.

Of these sharp antitheses in Lincoln's character, Col. Clark E. Carr, who knew him well, said in an address which I heard:

> "Abraham Lincoln was the drollest man I ever saw.
>
> "He could make a cat laugh. Never was another man so vivacious; never

have I seen another who provoked so much mirth, and who entered into rollicking fun with such glee. He was the most comical and jocose of human beings, laughing with the same zest at his own jokes as at those of others. I did not wonder that, while actively engaged in party politics, his opponents who had seen him in these moods called Abraham Lincoln a clown and an ape.

"Abraham Lincoln was the most serious man I ever saw.

"When I heard him protest against blighting our new territories with the curse of human slavery, in his debates with Senator Douglas, no man could have been more in earnest, none more serious. In his analysis of legal problems, whether in the practice of his profession or in the consideration of State papers, he became wholly absorbed in his subject. Sometimes he lapsed into reverie and communed with his own thoughts, noting nothing that was going on about him until aroused, when perhaps he would enter into a discussion of the subject that had occupied his mind, or perhaps break out into laughter and tell a joke or story that set the table in a roar.

"When I saw him at Gettysburg as he exclaimed, 'That we here highly resolve that the dead shall not have

died in vain; that the nation shall, under God, have a new birth of freedom, and that the government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth!'—when I heard him declare in his second inaugural address, 'Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled up by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years, so still it must be said, "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."... With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right,'—as I looked upon him and heard him utter these sentiments, upon these occasions, Abraham Lincoln was the most solemn, the most dignified, the most majestic, and at the same time the most benignant human being I ever saw.

"Rochefoucauld says that 'Gravity is a mystery of the body invented to conceal defects of the mind.' Lord Shaftesbury says that 'Gravity is the very essence of imposture.' Abraham

> Lincoln had none of this.
>
> "Man is the most serious of animals. Man is the most frivolous of animals. It is said that man is the only animal that can both laugh and cry. Abraham Lincoln gave full vent to his emotions. He went through life with no restraints nor manacles upon his human nature. He was honest in the expression of his feelings, whether serious or otherwise, honest in their manifestation, honest with himself.
>
> "It was because Abraham Lincoln was the most human of human beings that he is loved as has never been any other man that ever lived."—CLARK E. CARR: *My Day and Generation*, pp. 107-9.

There was much reason for this wide disparity of opinion in the varying moods of Lincoln himself, and the contrary aspects of his personality. But this was not the sole reason. Springfield itself was greatly divided concerning Mr. Lincoln. There were lawyers who had been on opposing sides of cases against him and had sometimes won them. There were all the petty animosities which grow up in a small city. Furthermore, Springfield was moderately full of disappointed people who had expected that their friendship for Lincoln would have procured for them some political appointment. Any political aspirant living in Maine or Missouri who had a fourth cousin living in Springfield and possessed of a speaking acquaintance with Mr. Lincoln, felt that he and his kinsfolk suffered an unmerited discourtesy if Mr.

Lincoln through such influence did not produce on application a commission as Major-General or an appointment as Ambassador to some foreign court.

We have a yet further difficulty to face in the conflict of testimony of habitually truthful people. If it were becoming in the author of a book such as this to pass any general criticism upon those authors who have preceded him in the same field, it might, perhaps, be counted not invidious to say that for the most part writers on the religion of Lincoln have been content to adduce the testimony of a limited number of apparently truthful witnesses in support of their theory, but have not given the evidence very much examination beyond the general fact that the witnesses were habitually truthful people. We shall not arrive at the truth in this fashion.

We may borrow an illustration from a field which lies just outside the scope of our present inquiry. Even to this day it is possible to start a warm discussion almost anywhere in Springfield over the question of Lincoln's domestic affairs. It is possible to prove on the testimony of unimpeached witnesses that Lincoln loved his wife passionately, and that he did not love her at all; that he married Mary Todd because he loved her and had already answered in his own heart all his previous questions and misgivings, and that he married her because she and her relatives practically compelled him to do so, and that he went to the marriage altar muttering that he was going to hell; that Mary Todd not only admired Abraham Lincoln, but loved him with a beautiful and wifely devotion, and that she hated him and never ceased to wreak revenge upon him for having once deserted her upon the eve of their announced marriage; that Mary Todd wore a white silk dress on

the night of her wedding, and that she never owned a white silk dress until she had become a resident of the White House; that the wedding was a gay affair, with a great dinner, and was followed by a reception for which several hundred printed invitations were issued, and that the wedding was hastily performed on a Sunday evening, Mr. Dresser, the minister, cutting short his evening service and dropping in on the way home to solemnize a quickly extemporized marriage contract. It would seem fairly easy to discover from a calendar of the year 1842 at least what day in the week was chosen for the wedding, but few if any of the disputants, or even of the biographers, appear to have taken this pains. If the present writer should ever have occasion to write about Abraham Lincoln's married life, he would not proceed very far without consulting a calendar for that year; and he would hope to settle at least one point in the controversy by telling the world that in 1842 the fourth day of November did not occur on Sunday or Tuesday, but on Friday;[28] Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln both being tinged with superstition, he might raise the question whether the celebration of the wedding upon that date probably was or was not long premeditated. But the present book does not concern itself with these questions, and the matter is here introduced merely to illustrate that no point in controversy in a matter of this character can be definitely settled by the unsupported testimony of a single honest witness relying upon his memory after the lapse of many years.

Evidence such as we are to consider is of two kinds, known in logic as *a priori* and *a posteriori*. The first kind is evidence from antecedent probability; the second is evidence relating to matter after the fact. An illustration will serve:

A man is found dead, with a wound in his forehead, and there are no witnesses who can be produced in court who saw the man die. The wound appears to have been produced by a bullet, and, as no weapon is found beside the body, there is a presumption that the man has been murdered. A neighbor is accused of having committed the deed. The *a priori* evidence is adduced in testimony that the defendant and the deceased had long been on bad terms with each other on account of a line fence between their adjacent properties; that the defendant had threatened to kill the deceased and had recently bought a revolver. The evidence *a posteriori* is found in the fact that the defendant's revolver on examination shows one empty chamber and that the ball in the deceased man's brain is of the caliber suited to his weapon and of the same manufacture as the unused cartridges in the weapon. To this may be added other incriminating facts, as of measured footprints near the scene of murder which correspond to the size of the defendant's boots, and of possible blood stains upon his clothing.

A very large volume of *a priori* evidence is sometimes set aside by a single *a posteriori* fact; for instance, in the foregoing supposititious case it may be entirely possible to prove that the murder was committed by a tramp, and that the defendant was ten miles away at the time the deed was done.

On the other hand, a large volume of *a posteriori* evidence sometimes disappears in the face of a single *a priori* consideration. A man is accused of having stolen a sheep. It is shown in evidence that on the evening when the sheep was stolen he walked through his neighbor's pasture and was seen to approach the sheep; that he sold mutton on the day

after the loss of the sheep, and that a fresh sheepskin was found nailed to his barn door. All this *a posteriori* evidence and much more may be completely set aside in the minds of the jury by the single fact that the man accused has lived for forty years in the community and has borne a reputation incompatible with the crime of sheep-stealing.

In the examination of testimony concerning alleged utterances of Abraham Lincoln in matters of religious belief, we must ask such questions as these:

Is the witness credible? Had he opportunity to know what he professes to relate? Were other witnesses present, and if so, do they agree in their recollection of the words spoken? Was the interview published at a time when it could have been denied by those who had knowledge of the incident? Had the witness time to enlarge the incident by frequent telling and by such exaggeration and enlargement of detail as is likely to occur with the lapse of years? Had the witness a probable motive for exaggeration; does he appear to tell what he would presumably have liked Mr. Lincoln to say, and does it sound more like the narrator's own style than it does like Mr. Lincoln? Do the language and the sentiments expressed accord with the published addresses, letters, and authentic documents of Abraham Lincoln, and are the views expressed in accord with the views which he is known to have held? On the other hand, is it possible that in the freedom of personal conversation Mr. Lincoln may have said some things which he would not have been likely to say in formal discourse or to write in official documents?

It is not necessary that we formally ask these and only these questions; but these are the kinds of sieve through which oral testimony must be passed if we

are to learn the truth.

Particular care needs to be exercised in the application of these tests, and especially in the employment of all *a priori* methods. The author of this volume is a Christian minister, and would be heartily glad to find in Mr. Lincoln's authentic utterances indubitable evidence that Mr. Lincoln was essentially a Christian; there is need that he take especial care not to apply these discriminating tests in such fashion as to sustain his own prejudices. Nor must he magnify his caution until it becomes an inverted prejudice.

On the other hand, the *a priori* method must on no account be ruled out. Mr. Lincoln left a great quantity of authentic material. His speeches, letters, and state papers fill twelve volumes, and even these do not contain all of his signed material. We are compelled to judge alleged utterances of his somewhat in the light of our certain knowledge of what he wrote and said. Let us illustrate the application of this principle:

If an aged man living in central Illinois were now to arise and say: "I knew Abraham Lincoln, and he said to me one day in private conversation, 'There is no God,'" we should be justified in discrediting that man's testimony, even though he bore a good reputation for veracity. The antecedent improbability of such a declaration on the part of Mr. Lincoln is too great for us to accept it on the basis of one man's recollection of a private and unwitnessed conversation fifty years after Mr. Lincoln's death.

We should be equally justified in rejecting the testimony at this late date of one of Mr. Lincoln's old-time neighbors who would say that Mr. Lincoln told him that he believed the whole of the Athanasian

Creed.

Especial care is necessary in dealing with the alleged utterances of deceased persons in matters of religion. The author of this book has conducted a thousand funerals, and has been told every conceivable kind of story concerning some of the persons deceased. To the credit of our frail humanity be it recorded that nine-tenths of this testimony was favorable. There are few finer traits in human nature than those which prompt us to speak only good of the dead. The eagerness of those who have known not only the virtues but the faults of living men to pass lightly over the faults and emphasize the virtues of these same men when they are dead is not only a manifestation of the finest sort of love of fair play in refusing to accuse those who cannot make answer, but is also an exhibition of one of the noblest impulses of the human spirit.

Even the tendency of ministers to lie like gentlemen on funeral occasions is not to be too unsparingly condemned. It springs from a belief that the better part of a man's life is the truer part of him, and that a man has a right to be judged by the best that is in him not only of achievement but even of defeated aspiration.

William Allen White is fond of relating a story concerning a funeral in Kansas. The minister was in the midst of his eulogy when a man who had come in late and had not heard the beginning of the discourse tiptoed down the aisle, took a long look into the coffin, and returned to his seat. The minister, somewhat disconcerted by this proceeding, addressed him, saying, "The opportunity to view the remains will be given later." "I know that," replied the man, "but I had begun to suspect that I had

gotten into the wrong funeral."

One who has had much experience with funerals and with attempts to make dead men appear better than the same men living actually were or appeared to be, knows that these efforts are not usually the result of deliberate falsehood. They grow out of generous impulses and an easy tendency to exaggeration. But some people do actually lie, and this fact also is not wholly to be forgotten.

With these reminders of human frailty and human generosity and of the uncertainty of all things human, we proceed to examine in some detail the vast and contradictory mass of evidence which after the death of Abraham Lincoln was published concerning his faith or the lack of it.

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What is in some respects the foremost example of platform and pulpit oratory concerning Lincoln is the oration of Bishop Charles Henry Fowler, deceased, of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It illustrates at once the excellency and the defects of works of this character. The oration had its beginning in a eulogy delivered in Chicago on May 4, 1865, the day of Lincoln's burial at Springfield. From time to time as years went by, Bishop Fowler had occasion to deliver other addresses on Lincoln, which, in 1904, he reshaped into something like the final form of the oration. First delivered in Minneapolis, it was repeated in many cities and before great audiences. It became the Bishop's best known and most popular address. It is the first and easily the greatest of the five that make up the volume of his Patriotic Orations, the others being on Grant, McKinley, Washington, and The Great Deeds of Great Men. Of that large book it fills more than a hundred pages. It

was too long ever to be delivered at one time, but it was completely written, and fully committed to memory, so that he chose at each delivery what portions he would utter and what he would omit. Even with the omissions he rarely spoke less than two and one-half hours, and sometimes occupied three hours, his audiences hearing with sustained interest to the close. Of it his son says, that "through its delivery in various parts of the country, and by the natural process of accretion and attraction, new facts were added and others verified, until in 1906 it was put in this final form."

Here is an address whose composition occupied a strong and able man for thirty-one years. It thrills with admiration for its subject. It is alive with patriotism and religion. It deserved, in many respects, the attention which it received. Men have been known to say that having heard this address they would never spoil the impression by listening to any other address on Lincoln.

And yet it would not be safe to quote this lecture in any of its substantial parts without further investigation of the authority on which Bishop Fowler relied. He was a truthful man, and a man of ability, and if he had been asked what means he took to verify his statements, he would probably have said that he admitted no statement to his lecture which he did not find attested by some competent and truthful witness. Doubtless so, and most of the lecture is true, and the impression which it makes as a whole is substantially true, but that is not enough. Doubtless Bishop Fowler read in some book or magazine article by a truthful writer that on the day Lincoln submitted the Emancipation proclamation to his Cabinet, he first read in the presence of the

Cabinet a chapter in the Bible. It would not have required very much of investigation to have convinced Bishop Fowler that what Lincoln really read was not the Bible, but Artemus Ward. He did not intend to lie about it. He picked up the account from some other speaker who had heard or read that Lincoln read a chapter from some book, and thought that the Bible was the proper book to read on an occasion of that character. Neither the speaker nor Bishop Fowler intended to be untruthful, but neither of them had any training in or inclination toward historical investigation. It would be easy to guess that a thousand Methodist preachers and some others have retold the story on the authority of Bishop Fowler. And that is far from being the only inaccuracy in the lecture. Indeed, it shows throughout how much it grew "by the natural process of accretion and attraction" and how little by the verification of the facts.

This lecture is cited because it is in many respects the very best of its type, as it is probably also the most noted, and one that was delivered to more people than any other on Abraham Lincoln.

It does not suffice to rely upon any second authorities in investigations of this character, nor to accept the statements of even truthful witnesses without some sifting of the evidence.

With this in mind, we come to what is the most crucial and difficult of all the incidents bearing upon our inquiry—the incident reported to Dr. Holland by President Bateman.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE BATEMAN INCIDENT

HON. NEWTON BATEMAN was for many years Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Illinois, being chosen to that position in 1858 and holding the place with one brief intermission for fourteen years. He was then elected President of Knox College and served with distinction in that capacity for seventeen years. He knew Lincoln well. He was small in stature, and Lincoln was very tall. Lincoln used to introduce Bateman to friends, saying, "This is my little friend, the big schoolmaster of Illinois." He was, perhaps, the last man to shake hands with Abraham Lincoln as Lincoln was leaving Springfield, and he was one of the pallbearers at Lincoln's funeral. The version of Lincoln's Farewell Address which was published in the *Illinois State Journal* was printed on the day following Lincoln's departure and was reproduced from Dr. Bateman's memory of it. Although it varies from the official report it appears to have been a very nearly accurate report of what Lincoln actually said as judged by Lincoln's own reproduction of the address.

Reference has already been made to the difficulties which Dr. J. G. Holland met in Springfield when he journeyed thither in quest of material on the *Life of Lincoln*. To his great satisfaction he was able to obtain from Mr. Bateman an incident which has become the corner-stone of a thousand Lincoln eulogies. It is here reproduced entire:

"Mr. Newton Bateman,[29] Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Illinois, occupied a room adjoining and opening into the Executive Chamber. Frequently this door was open during Mr. Lincoln's receptions; and throughout the seven months or more of his occupation Mr. Bateman saw him nearly every day. Often when Mr. Lincoln was tired he closed his door against all intrusion, and called Mr. Bateman into his room for a quiet talk. On one of these occasions Mr. Lincoln took up a book containing a careful canvass of the city of Springfield in which he lived, showing the candidate for whom each citizen had declared it his intention to vote in the approaching election. Mr. Lincoln's friends had, doubtless at his own request, placed the result of the canvass in his hands. This was toward the close of October, and only a few days before the election. Calling Mr. Bateman to a seat at his side, having previously locked all doors, he said: 'Let us look over this book. I wish particularly to see how the ministers of Springfield are going to vote.' The leaves were turned, one by one, and as the names were examined Mr. Lincoln frequently asked if this one and that were not a minister, or an elder, or a member of such or such a church, and sadly

expressed his surprise on receiving an affirmative answer. In that manner they went through the book, and then he closed it and sat silently and for some minutes regarding a memorandum in pencil which lay before him. At length he turned to Mr. Bateman with a face full of sadness, and said: 'Here are twenty-three, ministers, of different denominations, and all of them are against me but three; and here are a great many prominent members of the churches, a very large majority of whom are against me. Mr. Bateman, I am not a Christian—God knows I would be one—but I have carefully read the Bible, and I do not so understand this book'; and he drew from his bosom a pocket New Testament. 'These men well know,' he continued, 'that I am for freedom in the territories, freedom everywhere as far as the Constitution and laws will permit, and that my opponents are for slavery. They know this, and yet, with this book in their hands, in the light of which human bondage cannot live a moment, they are going to vote against me. I do not understand it at all.'

"Here Mr. Lincoln paused—paused for long minutes, his features surcharged with emotion. Then he rose and walked up and down the

room in the effort to retain or regain his self-possession. Stopping at last, he said, with a trembling voice and his cheeks wet with tears: 'I know there is a God, and that He hates injustice and slavery. I see the storm coming, and I know that His hand is in it. If He has a place and work for me—and I think He has—I believe I am ready. I am nothing, but truth is everything. I know I am right because I know that liberty is right, for Christ teaches it, and Christ is God. I have told them that a house divided against itself cannot stand, and Christ and reason say the same; and they will find it so. Douglas don't care whether slavery is voted up or voted down, but God cares, and humanity cares, and I care; and with God's help I shall not fail. I may not see the end; but it will come, and I shall be vindicated; and these men will find that they have not read their Bibles aright.'

"Much of this was uttered as if he were speaking to himself, and with a sad and earnest solemnity of manner impossible to be described. After a pause, he resumed: 'Doesn't it appear strange that men can ignore the moral aspects of this contest? A revelation could not make it plainer to me that slavery or the government must be destroyed. The future would be something awful, as

> I look at it, but for this rock on which I stand [alluding to the Testament which he still held in his hand] especially with the knowledge of how these ministers are going to vote. It seems as if God had borne with this thing [slavery] until the very teachers of religion have come to defend it from the Bible, and to claim for it a divine character and sanction; and now the cup of iniquity is full, and the vials of wrath will be poured out.'"—HOLLAND: *Life of Lincoln*, pp. 236-38.

Dr. J. G. Holland was an author of ability and character. His *Life of Lincoln* was up to the time of its publication far and away the best that had appeared. Even Herndon and Lamon are compelled to speak of it with respect. Lamon says: "Out of the mass of work which appeared, of one only—Dr. Holland's—is it possible to speak with any degree of respect." That this also represented substantially the opinion of Herndon is clearly in evidence. With two such names as Newton Bateman and J. G. Holland supporting it, an incident of this character was certain to carry great weight. It can be found more or less abridged and in some cases garbled and enlarged in any one of a hundred books and of a thousand or probably ten thousand Lincoln's Day addresses. This report was the direct occasion for the assembling of a considerable mass of opposing evidence which we shall find in succeeding chapters. It was attacked publicly and directly by Ward Hill Lamon in his *Life of Lincoln* in 1872. The following is Mr. Lamon's

reply:

> "Mr. Newton Bateman is reported to have said that a few days before the Presidential election in 1860, Mr. Lincoln came into his office, closed the door against intrusion, and proposed to examine a book which had been furnished him, at his own request, 'Containing a careful canvass of the city of Springfield, showing the candidate for whom each citizen had declared his intention to vote at the approaching election. He ascertained that only three ministers of the gospel, out of twenty-three, would vote for him, and that, of the prominent church-members, a very large majority were against him.' Mr. Bateman does not say so directly, but the inference is plain that Mr. Lincoln had not previously known what were the sentiments of the Christian people who lived with him in Springfield: he had never before taken the trouble to inquire whether they were for him or against him. At all events, when he made the discovery out of the book, he wept, and declared that he 'did not understand it at all.' He drew from his bosom a pocket New Testament, and, 'with a trembling voice and his cheeks wet with tears,' quoted it against his political opponents generally, and especially

against Douglas. He professed to believe that the opinions adopted by him and his party were derived from the teachings of Christ; averred that Christ was God; and, speaking of the Testament which he carried in his bosom, called it 'this rock, on which I stand.' When Mr. Bateman expressed surprise, and told him that his friends generally were ignorant that he entertained such sentiments, he gave this answer quickly: 'I know they are: I am obliged to appear different to them.' Mr. Bateman is a respectable citizen, whose general reputation for truth and veracity is not to be impeached; but his story, as reported in Holland's Life, is so inconsistent with Mr. Lincoln's whole character, that it must be rejected as altogether incredible. From the time of the Democratic split in the Baltimore Convention, Mr. Lincoln, as well as every other politician of the smallest sagacity, knew that his success was as certain as any future could be. At the end of October, most of the States had clearly voted in a way which left no lingering doubts of the final result in November. If there ever was a time in his life when ambition charmed his whole heart,—if it could ever be said of him that 'hope elevated and joy brightened his crest,' it was on the eve of that election which he

saw was to lift him at last to the high place for which he had sighed and struggled so long. It was not then that he would mourn and weep because he was in danger of not getting the votes of the ministers and members of the churches he had known during many years for his steadfast opponents: he did not need them, and had not expected them. Those who understood him best are very sure that he never, under any circumstances, could have fallen into such weakness—not even when his fortunes were at the lowest point of depression—as to play the part of a hypocrite for their support. Neither is it possible that he was at any loss about the reasons which religious men had for refusing him their support; and, if he had said that he could not understand it at all, he must have spoken falsely. But the worst part of the tale is Mr. Lincoln's acknowledgment that his 'friends generally were deceived concerning his religious sentiments, and that he was obliged to appear different to them.'

"According to this version, which has had considerable currency, he carried a New Testament in his bosom, carefully hidden from his intimate associates: he believed that Christ was God; yet his friends understood him to deny the verity of

the gospel: he based his political doctrines on the teachings of the Bible; yet before all men, except Mr. Bateman, he habitually acted the part of an unbeliever and reprobate, because he was 'obliged to appear different to them.' How obliged? What compulsion required him to deny that Christ was God if he really believed Him to be divine? Or did he put his political necessities above the obligations of truth, and oppose Christianity against his convictions, that he might win the favor of its enemies? It may be that his mere silence was sometimes misunderstood; but he never made an express avowal of any religious opinion which he did not entertain. He did not 'appear different' at one time from what he was at another, and certainly he never put on infidelity as a mere mask to conceal his Christian character from the world. There is no dealing with Mr. Bateman, except by a flat contradiction. Perhaps his memory was treacherous, or his imagination led him astray, or, peradventure, he thought a fraud no harm if it gratified the strong desire of the public for proofs of Mr. Lincoln's orthodoxy. It is nothing to the purpose that Mr. Lincoln said once or twice that he thought this or that portion of the Scripture was the

product of divine inspiration; for he was one of the class who hold that all truth is inspired, and that every human being with a mind and a conscience is a prophet. He would have agreed much more readily with one who taught that Newton's discoveries, or Bacon's philosophy, or one of his own speeches, were the works of men divinely inspired above their fellows. But he never told anyone that he accepted Jesus Christ, or performed a single one of the acts which necessarily follow upon such a conviction. At Springfield and at Washington he was beset on the one hand by political priests, and on the other by honest and prayerful Christians. He despised the former, respected the latter, and had use for both. He said with characteristic irreverence, that he would not undertake 'to run the churches by military authority'; but he was, nevertheless, alive to the importance of letting the churches 'run themselves in the interest of his party.' Indefinite expressions about 'Divine Providence,' the 'justice of God,' 'the favor of the Most High,' were easy, and not inconsistent with his religious notion. In this, accordingly, he indulged freely; but never in all that time did he let fall from his lips or his pen an expression which remotely implied

> the slightest faith in Jesus as the Son of God and the Saviour of men."—LAMON: *Life of Lincoln*, pp. 499-502.

Confronted by an irreconcilable contradiction like this, the easiest way is to cut the knot, and this may be done by any one of several methods. We may say that, while Lamon and Herndon were truthful men, their reputation for veracity, good as it was, is less than that of Bateman and Holland, and we prefer to believe the latter pair. Or, we may say that, while Bateman knew Lincoln well, both Herndon and Lamon knew him much better, and were better able to judge what Lincoln would have said. Or, we may say that Bateman was present when Lincoln spoke, and Holland was present when Bateman related the interview, and neither Herndon nor Lamon was present on either occasion, and we will believe the one credible witness who was actually there, and whose positive testimony outweighs any possible volume of negative testimony on the part of men who were not present, and who only imagine what Mr. Lincoln would probably have said. Or, we may say that in the light of the inherent improbability of such an utterance on the part of Mr. Lincoln, as determined by a comparison of this alleged utterance with his authentic statements, we cannot accept it, even though the two men who vouch, the one for its utterance and the other for its transmission, are men of exceptional veracity. Or, we may say that in such a conflict of direct evidence and inherent improbability, and the mutual opposition of honest men who were in a position to know something about the religious views of Mr. Lincoln, it is impossible for us to decide.

We will not seek by any of these convenient methods

to cut the knot, but endeavor to untie it. We are fortunate in having some collateral evidence after the fact.

Herndon had awaited the publication of Holland's book with great eagerness, and he was pleased with it as a whole. But the Bateman incident roused his wrath. To him it made Lincoln a hypocrite, dissembling a Christian faith, which he had no good reason to conceal, beneath a pretense of infidelity, which was not, as Herndon believed, a profession that would have helped him.

Herndon promptly walked over to the State House and interviewed Mr. Bateman. "I instantly sought Mr. Bateman," he said, "and found him in his office. I spoke to him politely and kindly, and he spoke to me in the same manner. I said substantially to him that Mr. Holland, in order to make Mr. Lincoln a technical Christian, had made him a hypocrite."

What Bateman said to Herndon he was forbidden to publish, but the inference is ineluctable that he repudiated, in part, the interview with Holland, but did it on condition that Herndon should not publish the statement in a way that would raise the issue of veracity between himself and Holland.

This was in the autumn of 1865. In the spring of 1866, Herndon again called upon Bateman, but got no farther.

As the controversy waxed furious, Herndon made further and insistent efforts to obtain from Bateman a statement which could be made to the public. Herndon preserved notes of the interviews, which he dated, December 3, 12, and 28, 1866. Bateman still refused to emerge from his silence. One can imagine Herndon in his yellow trousers twice rolled up at the

bottom, hitching his chair a little closer to the little superintendent, and with long, skinny forefinger outstretched, probing with insistent cross-examination into the innermost recesses of the *ipsissima versa* of the interview with Lincoln and the subsequent one with Holland. Whether he and Mr. Bateman continued to address each other politely is not known, but Herndon endeavored first to persuade and afterward to force, Bateman to do one of three things,—to avow over his own signature the story as Holland told it; to repudiate the interview and throw the responsibility upon Holland; or to permit Herndon to publish what Bateman had told to him. Bateman would do none of these three things. If he did the first, Herndon would accuse him of falsehood; if he did the second, Holland would accuse him of falsehood; and if he did the third, he would become the central figure in a controversy that already had become more than red-hot. He refused to say anything, and announced to all comers that the publicity was "extremely distasteful" to him.

Herndon went as far as he could toward making public what Bateman told to him. He published the following statement, designed to throw the greater part of the blame upon Holland, but to force Bateman to relate to the public what Bateman had said to him, and what he had written down and held ready to produce:

> "I cannot now detail what Mr. Bateman said, as it was a private conversation, and I am forbidden to make use of it in public. If some good gentleman can only get the seal of secrecy removed, I can show what was said and done. On my word, the

> world may take it for granted that Holland is wrong; that he does not state Mr. Lincoln's views correctly. Mr. Bateman, if correctly represented in Holland's *Life of Lincoln*, is the only man, the sole and only man, who dare say that Mr. Lincoln believed in Jesus as the Christ of God, as the Christian world represents. This is not a pleasant situation for Mr. Bateman. I have notes and dates of our conversation; and the world will sometime know who is truthful, and who is otherwise. I doubt whether Bateman is correctly represented by Holland."—LAMON: *Life of Lincoln*, p. 496.

Mr. Bateman was, indeed, in an uncomfortable position and any one of the three ways out of it seemed likely to make it still more uncomfortable. He continued to maintain a profound silence. Years afterward when Arnold was preparing his *Life of Lincoln* for the press and Arnold asked him concerning the truth of the incident as recorded by Holland, he replied with extreme brevity that it was "substantially correct." (Arnold: Life of Lincoln, p. 179).

The only portion of Bateman's admission to Herndon which Bateman finally, and with great reluctance, consented to have published, was one which covered the alleged utterance "Christ is God." It was a letter written in 1867, and marked "Confidential." In this letter Bateman said:

> "He [Lincoln] was applying the principles of moral and religious truth to the duties of the hour, the condition of the country, and the conduct of public men—ministers of the gospel. I had no thought of orthodoxy or heterodoxy, Unitarianism, Trinitarianism, or any other ism, during the whole conversation, and I don't suppose or believe he had."

This is a guarded letter, but it is sufficiently specific for our purposes. If the conversation between Bateman and Lincoln was of this character, with nothing to distinguish the view of Lincoln as Unitarian or Trinitarian, Lincoln certainly did not say:

> "I know I am right because I know that liberty is right, for Christ teaches it, and Christ is God."

It is evident that Bateman, crowded by Herndon in repeated cross-examination, came as near to repudiating those parts of the interview to which Herndon objected as he could do without raising publicly the issue of veracity between himself and Holland. The attitude of Dr. Bateman in this matter forbids us to believe that the story as it stands in Holland's book can be true.

Bateman is not mentioned in the index of Nicolay and Hay's *Life of Lincoln*, and it is practically certain that they did not credit the incident.

What, under these circumstances, shall be our judgment concerning this most hotly contested of all

incidents concerning the religious life of Abraham Lincoln?

The incident had a basis of fact. Neither Bateman nor Holland would have created such a story out of whole cloth. But Bateman was under very strong temptation to enlarge upon the incident, and had had five years in which to magnify it in his own mind. The then recent death of Mr. Lincoln and the strong desire of Christian people for a clear statement of his faith, made it easy to color the recollection and sketch in details, which did not seem to be important departures from the truth when related in verbal conversation, but which had a different look when they appeared in cold type. Holland, who was a writer of fiction as well as history, did not fail to embellish the story as Bateman told it to him. He probably did not write it down at the time, but recalled it afterward from memory, and in his final report it underwent additional coloring and the sketching in of detail.

Neither of these two men intentionally falsified, but between the two the story was materially enlarged, and there was an undistributed margin of error between the original event as it occurred in 1860 and the very pretty story which Holland printed in 1865. Neither Holland nor Bateman cared, probably, to face too searching an inquiry as to how that enlargement had come.

Dr. Bateman was a man of probity and upright character. He never willfully misrepresented. But he had a rhetorical mind; not only his style, but his mind, was rhetorical. He embellished his narratives because it was in him to do so. The two reports which he made of Lincoln's farewell address in Springfield[30] showed, both of them, such

embellishments,[31] and he was as unconscious that he in later years enlarged upon his own first report as he was that his first report enlarged upon the address itself. These enlargements were slight, and did not destroy nor greatly alter the sense; but his changes never tended to simplicity. He was a master of good English style, but it was a grander, more rhetorical style than that of Lincoln. Lincoln, after receiving his special notice of nomination, submitted his letter of acceptance to Bateman, and at Bateman's suggestion changed a split infinitive. Lincoln knew that Bateman was an authority on good English, and respected his opinion and valued his friendship. Whatever enlargements Bateman's memory made upon his interview with Lincoln were made without intent to deceive; and whatever Holland added was added without intent to deceive. But the interview of 1860 and the story about it in Holland's book five years later have between them a discrepancy which must be distributed in a ratio which we are not able positively to determine between two good and truthful men, each of whom enlarged a little upon the material that was given to him.

A final evidence that Bateman saw no way to remedy the situation by telling the public exactly what occurred in his interview with Lincoln in 1860, is found in the fact that while he was President of Knox College he had occasion to prepare and deliver there and elsewhere a carefully written lecture on "Abraham Lincoln." Every generation of Knox College students heard, at least once, that famous oration. That lecture contains little else than Bateman's own personal reminiscences, and is an interesting and valuable document. For our present purpose it is chiefly valuable in this, that it contains not one word about the interview which had forever associated the

name of Newton Bateman with that of Abraham Lincoln. The fact that Bateman felt compelled to omit it altogether from that oft-repeated lecture on Lincoln is a sufficient reason why no one else should ever use it.

Precisely what did Bateman tell Herndon that he had told to Holland, which led Herndon to tell the public that Holland misrepresented Bateman? We do not know precisely. What became of Herndon's carefully cherished notes of his five interviews with Bateman is not known,[32] but we are not left wholly to conjecture. Though Herndon was forbidden to tell what Bateman told to him, he came as near to it as he could do without open violation of his pledge of secrecy. In his own *Life of Lincoln*, published in 1889, he inserted a footnote in which he said:

> "One of what Lincoln regarded as the remarkable features of his canvass for President was the attitude of some of his neighbors in Springfield. A poll of the voters had been made in a little book and given to him. On running over the names he found that the greater part of the clergy of the city—in fact all but three—were against him. This depressed him somewhat, and he called in Dr. Newton Bateman, who as Superintendent of Public Instruction occupied the room adjoining his own in the State House, and whom he habitually addressed as 'Mr. Schoolmaster.' He commented bitterly on the attitude of the preachers and many of their

> followers, who, pretending to be believers in the Bible and God-fearing Christians, yet by their votes demonstrated that they cared not whether slavery was voted up or down. 'God cares and humanity cares,' he reflected, 'and if they do not they surely have not read their Bible aright.'"—HERNDON: *Life of Lincoln*, III, 466-67.

To accept this as containing the essential part of the interview between Lincoln and Bateman does not involve our preferring the statement of Herndon to that of Bateman, for we have no definite statement of Bateman. Bateman, under close examination, told Herndon what he remembered that Lincoln told him, and Herndon promised not to tell it without Bateman's permission. Herndon did tell, however, that it was very different from Holland's story, and he published this in Lamon's book in 1872 and Bateman did not deny it. He published the above quoted and additional note in his own book in 1889, while Bateman was living, and Bateman did not protest. We cannot, therefore, be far from the truth if we accept the above and stop there.

Unless the notes of Herndon's five interviews with Bateman shall be found and published, this is probably the nearest we shall ever come to knowing what Bateman told Herndon that Lincoln had said to him. If those notes shall be found, they may amplify the conversation but cannot be expected materially to modify it. This is all that it is safe to assume of Lincoln's confession of faith to Bateman. Whoever adds to it the glosses of the Holland biography does it at his own risk.

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CHAPTER IX

THE LAMON BIOGRAPHY

WARD HILL LAMON was for many years a close friend of Lincoln.[33] Their relations began in 1847 when Lamon settled at Danville and continued until Lincoln's death. Both there and at Bloomington, Lamon was Lincoln's local associate and so-called partner. When Lincoln voted at the Presidential election of 1860, the men who accompanied him to the polls were William H. Herndon, Ward Hill Lamon, and Col. Elmer Ellsworth. When Lincoln was elected and his political friends had slated Lamon for a foreign mission, Lincoln appointed him Marshal of the District of Columbia that he might have him close at hand. He was a member of the party which accompanied Lincoln to Washington, and when through apparent danger of assassination the route was changed and Lincoln slipped into Washington with a single companion, it was Lamon whom he chose to accompany him. Lamon had charge of the arrangements of Lincoln's trip to Gettysburg, and accompanied Lincoln and was in charge when he visited the battlefield of Antietam. His book of personal "Recollections," edited by his daughter and published in 1895, is full of interest and contains much of permanent value. His *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, published in 1872, is the most bitterly denounced of all the biographies of Lincoln. It involved its author and publisher in heavy financial loss, and the unsold portion of the edition is alleged to have been bought up by friends of Lincoln and

quietly destroyed. Lamon intended to have followed this volume, whose subject-matter ended with Lincoln's arrival in Washington in 1861, with a second volume covering Lincoln's life as President, but neither a second volume nor a second edition of the first was ever issued.

How Lamon, being a friend of Lincoln, could ever have written such a book has been the subject of much conjecture. Herndon believed that during the latter part of his life in Washington Lamon had become embittered against Lincoln. Lamon's daughter in a magazine article on the subject professed her father's abiding friendship for Lincoln, but maintained that he was endeavoring to tell the true story of a great life and to recover the real Lincoln from the realm of myth (Dorothy Lamon Teillard: "Lincoln in Myth and in Fact," *World's Work*, February, 1911, pp. 14040-44).

The basis of Lamon's book is the Herndon manuscripts, copies of which Herndon sold to Lamon for $2,000 in 1870. That Herndon bitterly regretted the necessity of this sale, there is clear evidence; but he had come to a condition of great poverty; and there were other reasons why it seemed unlikely that he himself would ever write a Life of Lincoln. That Lamon himself wrote the book without assistance was disputed from the beginning, and Herndon was accused of being its real author. In letters to Horace White in 1890, Herndon told the truth, as is now believed, concerning the authorship.

> "You regret, as well as myself, that I sold my MSS. to Lamon. The reason why I did so was that I was then, in 1870-72, a poor devil and had to sell

> to live. From 1853 to 1865 I spent all my time and money for the 'nigger,' or rather for Liberty and the Union—lost my practice, went to farming, and went under in the crash of 1871-73, and that, too, from no speculations, vices, etc. Today I have to work for tomorrow's bread, and yet I am a happy and contented man. I own a little farm of sixty-five acres and raise fruits for a living. Now you have the reasons for my acts.
>
> "In reference to Lamon's book, I can truthfully say that Chauncey F. Black,[34] son of J. S. Black, wrote quite every word of it.... I have for years been written to by various persons to know why Lamon was so much prejudiced against Lincoln. The bitterness, if any, was not in Lamon so much as in Black, though I am convinced that Lamon was no solid, firm friend of Lincoln, especially during Lincoln's administration, or the latter part of it."—NEWTON: *Lincoln and Herndon*, pp. 307-8.

Herndon stoutly denied having written a single line of Lamon's book, but he furnished the greater part of the material in the form of documents, and gave further aid by letters and suggestions. Thirteen years after it was published he wrote to Lamon, who was still hoping to issue a new biography which would include the volume already issued and a second

volume, and said:

> "I desire to see your new Life win. Your first Life is nearly suppressed—is suppressed or will be by rings—bears, and like. Lamon's first Life of Lincoln is the truest Life that was ever written of a man, as I think. I do not agree to all it says, and yet it is the most truthful Life of Lincoln written, or to be written probably, except your second Life. . . . Why, Lamon, if you and I had not told the exact truth about Lincoln, he would have been a myth in a hundred years after 1865. We knew him—loved him—had ideas and had the courage of our convictions. We told the world what Lincoln was and were terribly abused for it."—(*World's Work*, February, 1911, p. 14044).

One of the chief things which Lamon set out to do was to refute Holland's estimate of Lincoln's faith, particularly as it appeared in Holland's account of the Bateman story. Lamon held that any impression which people got that Lincoln possessed substantial Christian faith, was due to the fact that Lincoln was a wily politician, who saw the power and appreciated the prejudices of the churches and was determined not to suffer from their hostility. He not only grew more cautious as he grew older, but actually dissembled. His religious references were made as vague and general as possible, and he permitted himself to be misunderstood and misrepresented by ministers and others because of "his morbid ambition, coupled with a mortal fear that his

popularity would suffer by an open avowal of his deistic convictions" (Lamon, *Life of Lincoln*, p. 498).

His estimate of Lincoln is that "On the whole, he was an honest, although a shrewd, and by no means unselfish politician." He attributes Lincoln's melancholy definitely to his utter lack of faith.

> "It is very probable that much of Mr. Lincoln's unhappiness, the melancholy that 'dripped from him as he walked,' was due to his want of religious faith. When the black fit was on him, he suffered as much mental misery as Bunyan or Cowper in the deepest anguish of their conflicts with the Evil One. But the unfortunate conviction fastened upon him by his early associations, that there was no truth in the Bible, made all consolation impossible, and penitence useless. To a man of his temperament, predisposed as it was to depression of spirit, there could be no chance of happiness if doomed to live without hope and without God in the world. He might force himself to be merry with his chosen comrades; he might 'banish sadness' in mirthful conversation, or find relief in a jest; gratified ambition might elevate his feelings, and give him ease for a time: but solid comfort and permanent peace could come to him only 'through a correspondence fixed with heaven.' The fatal misfortune of his life,

> looking at it only as it affected him in this world, was the influence at New Salem and at Springfield which enlisted him on the side of unbelief. He paid the bitter penalty in a life of misery."—LAMON, *Life of Lincoln*, p. 504.

In support of this thesis, Lamon, aided and abetted by Herndon, sought for testimonials from those who had known Lincoln, endeavoring to prove that he had no religious faith. Herndon himself wrote a letter which we shall quote later because of its bearing upon a particular point which we have yet to discuss, and gave the names of Judge Logan, John T. Stuart, Joshua F. Speed, and James H. Matheny as those who would confirm his declaration that Lincoln was an infidel. Herndon's own definition of the term infidel is susceptible of such varying definitions in his different letters and published articles that it is not always easy to tell just what he meant by it, but in some of these he was specific and told, from his own alleged knowledge or his memory of the testimony of others, what Lincoln believed and denied. Judge Logan appears not to have contributed to the discussion, but from several of the others and from some other men whose letters Herndon already had, Lamon made up a considerable volume of testimony concerning the unbelief of Lincoln. Some of these we quote, reserving others for later consideration.

Hon. John T. Stuart was alleged to have said:

> "I knew Mr. Lincoln when he first came here, and for years afterwards. He was an avowed and open infidel,

> sometimes bordered on atheism. I have often and often heard Lincoln and one W. D. Herndon, who was a free-thinker, talk over this subject. Lincoln went further against Christian beliefs and doctrines and principles than any man I ever heard: he shocked me. I don't remember the exact line of his argument: suppose it was against the inherent defects, so called, of the Bible, and on grounds of reason. Lincoln always denied that Jesus was the Christ of God,—denied that Jesus was the Son of God, as understood and maintained by the Christian Church. The Rev. Dr. Smith, who wrote a letter, tried to convert Lincoln from infidelity so late as 1858, and couldn't do it."—LAMON, *Life of Lincoln*, p. 488.

It later developed that these quotations which appeared in Lamon's book in the form of letters to Herndon were in some instances, if not in all, Herndon's own reports of conversations with these friends of Lincoln, and not, in any case, signed letters. Several of the putative authors repudiated the statements attributed to them.

Dr. C. H. Ray was quoted as saying:

> "I do not know how I can aid you. You [Herndon] knew Mr. Lincoln far better than I did, though I knew him well; and you have served up his leading characteristics in a way that

> I should despair of doing, if I should try. I have only one thing to ask: that you do not give Calvinistic theology a chance to claim him as one of its saints and martyrs. He went to the Old-School Church; but, in spite of that outward assent to the horrible dogmas of the sect, I have reason from himself to know that his 'vital purity,' if that means belief in the impossible, was of a negative sort."—LAMON, *Life of Lincoln*, pp. 489-90.

Hon. David Davis was quoted as saying:

> "I do not know anything about Lincoln's religion, and do not think anybody knew. The idea that Lincoln talked to a stranger about his religion or religious views, or made such speeches, remarks, etc., about it as are published, is to me absurd. I knew the man so well: he was the most reticent, secretive man I ever saw, or expect to see. He had no faith, in the Christian sense of the term,—had faith in laws, principles, causes, and effects—philosophically: you [Herndon] know more about his religion than any man. You ought to know it, of course."—LAMON, *Life of Lincoln*, p. 489.

Lamon also printed a letter from James H. Matheny, who had been Lincoln's "best man" at his wedding, and a long-time and intimate friend. It would be

included in this chapter, as it is to be referred to in the next, but it is reserved for a more important use in the chapter on "Lincoln's Burnt Book."

Lamon's *Life of Lincoln* lashed into greater fury the tempest that already raged concerning Lincoln's religious faith. Nor was this the only criticism upon it. It was the first of the Lives of Lincoln to which the later term of "muckraking" might have been applied, and its spirit of hostility is best accounted for by the fact that its real author was not Lamon but Black, who not only entertained all the local prejudice which one element in Springfield had against Lincoln, but represented also a bitter political hostility, Black's father having been a member of Buchanan's Cabinet. Indeed there is alleged to have been a three-cornered and acrimonious dispute among the publishers, Lamon, and Black concerning an omitted chapter on Buchanan's administration which had something to do with one aspect of the book's financial failure. Black and Lamon and the publishers all lost money and the book was a financial disaster.

Notwithstanding its tone of astonishing bitterness against Lincoln, its shocking bad taste and its perverted viewpoint, Lamon's biography is a valuable source of information. Concerning it John Hay wrote to Lamon, "Nothing heretofore printed can compare with it in interest, and from the nature of the case all subsequent writers will have to come to you for a large class of facts."

In 1895 Lamon's daughter Dorothy, subsequently Mrs. Teillard, published a book of "Recollections" of Lincoln by her father, with no objectionable matter, and with a considerable number of valuable incidents. But this later book, while avoiding the

occasions of criticism which the first book evoked, added little to the character study which the first volume, with all its manifold defects, had contained.

Lamon was a very different man from Lincoln—so different that men who knew them both wondered at Lincoln's fondness for him. And he knew Lincoln intimately. But he was not capable of interpreting the best that was in Lincoln.

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CHAPTER X

THE REED LECTURE

ONE of the first results of the Lamon biography was a lecture prepared by Rev. James A. Reed, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield. This lecture[35] was delivered several times, and in 1873 was published in *Scribner's Magazine*, which at that time was edited by J. G. Holland. Holland had been horrified by the Lamon biography, and had reviewed it with such disfavor that Herndon attributes the failure of the book in no small part to Holland's pronounced opposition. This lecture, published in so widely read a magazine, produced a profound impression. A doubt which Lamon had raised and which Herndon later had the bad taste to emphasize concerning Lincoln's paternity turned to good advantage; and Reed produced from several of the men whom Lamon had quoted, counter-statements declaring that they had been misquoted. Of these was James H. Matheny, whose statement to Herndon we are to consider in connection with the story of Lincoln's burnt book and who wrote to Dr. Reed:

> "The language attributed to me in Lamon's book is not from my pen. I did not write it, and it does not express my sentiment of Mr. Lincoln's entire life and character. It is a mere collection of sayings gathered from private conversations that were only true of Mr. Lincoln's

> earlier life. I would not have allowed such an article to be printed over my signature as covering my opinion of Mr. Lincoln's life and religious sentiments. While I do believe Mr. Lincoln to have been an infidel in his former life, when his mind was as yet unformed, and his associations principally with rough and skeptical men, yet I believe he was a very different man in later life; and that after associating with a different class of men, and investigating the subject, he was a firm believer in the Christian religion."

Major John T. Stuart also repudiated the statement attributed to him, and not only so but gave detailed and positive statements which directly contradicted the more important part of what Lamon had attributed to him.

Dr. Reed went further and set forth with a considerable degree of precision the grounds for the statement that Lincoln's views had undergone marked change during his life in Springfield, particularly under the influence of Dr. Reed's predecessor, the Rev. James Smith.

Dr. Reed's lecture became the subject of acrimonious attack. His article was flouted, belittled, and railed at. But its essential affirmations have not been disproved. We shall devote a chapter to a consideration of the relations of Dr. Smith to Mr. Lincoln and shall find that Dr. Reed's claims were not extravagant.

Other controversialists took up the pen about this

time in confutation of Lamon. One of the most interesting and valuable of the contributions which then appeared was an article by B. F. Irwin, of Pleasant Plains, Illinois, published in the *Illinois State Journal*, for May 16, 1874.[36] He produced a considerable number of letters from men who had known Mr. Lincoln prior to his residence in Springfield and whose knowledge of his religious beliefs at that time was intimate and accurate. Of these by far the most important was from Lincoln's old teacher, Mentor Graham, which we shall quote at length in the chapter on Lincoln's "Burnt Book."

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Among these were letters from men who professed to have heard Lincoln charged with infidelity and had heard him deny it. The most important of these letters, however, aside from that of Mentor Graham, have value for us in the light they shed upon what really constituted Lincoln's alleged infidelity at this early period. That he had doubts and misgivings upon various subjects was not denied, but his hostility to the orthodox belief expressed itself chiefly in a vigorous denial of the endlessness of future punishment. This dogma Lincoln denied upon two grounds, as these letters affirm. First, the justice and mercy of God; and secondly, the fact that according to the Biblical scheme of redemption, whatever right the human race had possessed to immortality and lost through sin, had been restored in Christ. Lincoln was, according to the testimony of a number of these men who had known him, not an infidel, nor even a deist, but essentially a Universalist.

Irwin had interviewed Colonel James H. Matheny and quoted Matheny as denying that he had ever

heard Lincoln admit that he was an infidel and did not himself believe it. Irwin himself had known Lincoln personally for many years and had known large numbers of men who were intimately acquainted with him and he said:

> "I have never yet heard one single man express the belief that Lincoln was an infidel. Mr. Herndon, it is true, did have opportunities over others in knowing Mr. Lincoln's religious opinions, but other men had some opportunities, as well as Mr. Herndon, and to them I shall have to appeal, for I do not claim to personally know anything about Mr. Lincoln's religious faith. Though personally acquainted with Mr. Lincoln for twenty-eight years and often in his office, I never heard him say a word on the subject of his religious belief."

It will be noted that while the statements concerning Mr. Lincoln's alleged infidelity have been published over the name of Lamon, Herndon was held responsible for them in these controversies. The impetuous Herndon possessed none of the reticence of Bateman; and while denying that he wrote Lamon's book, rushed in as Lamon's champion and covered himself with wounds if not with glory.

Irwin's article proceeds to quote these old neighbors and friends of Lincoln, whose testimony, added to those adduced by Dr. Reed, was of very great weight. I have copied these[37] from the files of the *Illinois State Journal* in the Library of the Illinois State

Historical Society in Springfield and here produce three of them, reserving others for later comment.

One of the letters quoted in full by Irwin was from Thomas Mostiller, of Pleasant Plains, Menard County, Illinois. He professed to have heard Lincoln when he was a candidate for Congress in 1847 or 1848, when he was charged with being an infidel and explicitly denied it. Said he:

> "I was present and heard Josiah Grady ask Lincoln a question or two regarding a charge made against Lincoln of being an infidel, and Lincoln unqualifiedly denied the charge of infidelity, and said, in addition, his parents were Baptists, and brought him up in the belief of the Christian religion; and he believed it as much as anyone, but was sorry to say he had or made no pretensions to religion himself. I can't give his exact words, but would make oath anywhere that he positively denied the charge made against him of infidelity. That was the first time I ever heard the charge of infidelity against Lincoln. Grady did not say that he would not vote for Lincoln if he was an infidel, but my understanding from Grady was that he would not vote for Lincoln if he was an infidel; and Grady did, as I suppose, vote for him. I understood him that he should."

Another statement was by Jonathan Harnett. It was

not made in a letter, like the others, but was verbally stated to Mr. Irwin, who wrote it from Harnett's dictation, and was then read to him and endorsed by him. Mr. Harnett related an incident which he declared himself to have witnessed in Lincoln's office in 1858, when an argument was held on the truth of the Christian religion, a number of men participating. He affirmed that Mr. Lincoln ended the discussion by a cogent argument based on the restitution of all things in Christ, and the ultimate salvation of all men.

This line of argument, attested by a number who heard Mr. Lincoln in these discussions, will be readily understood by those who have heard, as he had heard from his infancy, the typical argument of the backwoods Baptist preacher, and who appreciates Mr. Lincoln's theory of the irrevocability of the Divine will, and the relation of the atonement to the restitution of all things. The essential difference between Lincoln's point of view and that of these preachers was that the preachers saw in the work of Christ the basis of personal forgiveness of sin; and Lincoln saw in it rather a manifestation of the irrevocable law of God for the ultimate salvation of the race.

Another of the letters included in the Irwin article was one from Isaac Cogdal, who related a conversation in Lincoln's office in Herndon's presence, in which Lincoln expressed himself somewhat as follows:

> "He did not nor could not believe in the endless punishment of any one of the human race. He understood punishment for sin to be a Bible doctrine; that punishment was

> parental in its object, aim and design, and intended for the good of the offender; hence it must cease when justice was satisfied. He added that all that was lost by the transgression of Adam was made good by the atonement; all that was lost by the fall was made good by the sacrifice; and he added this remark, that punishment being a 'provision of the gospel system, he was not sure but the world would be better off if a little more punishment was preached by our ministers, and not so much of pardon of sin.'"

I need only add, that to me these letters carry the conviction of reality. Lincoln had been rooted and grounded in the kind of dogma that began with Adam and related to his fall in vital sort the atonement of Christ. That Lincoln had some doubts concerning the person of Christ is not in point. He believed in God, and he knew the fact of sin, and he was dyed in the wool in arguments concerning the fall of the race in Adam and its redemption in Christ. But he did not dwell as did the preachers on individual forgiveness, which he sometimes doubted, but sought to evolve a legal and moral scheme with a final restoration. I regard these testimonies as essentially true.

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CHAPTER XI

THE HERNDON LECTURES, LETTERS, AND BIOGRAPHY

THE name of William H. Herndon finds frequent mention in these pages, as it must in any study of Abraham Lincoln. With all his faults as a biographer, his astigmatism, his anti-religious prejudice, his intolerance, his bad taste, he is an invaluable source of information concerning his partner and friend, Abraham Lincoln.

The publication of the Lamon biography and the Reed lecture brought him into a conflict from which no power on earth could probably have kept him out, and in it he did and said many things which for his own sake and Lincoln's he might better not have said.

But Herndon was no liar. Biased as he was, and himself a free-thinker or perhaps worse, he told the truth in such fashion as to throw it out of perspective, and sometimes told what he believed to be the truth in a passion which compels us to discount some of his testimony. But he did not lie nor intentionally misrepresent.

For twenty years Lincoln and Herndon were law partners, and their partnership was never formally dissolved. Lincoln liked Herndon, but there was no loss of love between Herndon and Mrs. Lincoln. She, if tradition about Springfield is to be believed, disliked him personally for his habits, and possibly

also for his politics, for he was an Abolitionist before Lincoln, and a very ardent one at that. Had she known what Herndon was to say about her in later years she might have been more gracious to her husband's junior partner, who had learned some habits at the bar of his father's tavern which he might better not have learned.

Herndon in his later life looked not a little like Lincoln, and showed no disposition by any change of beard or other device to lessen the resemblance; but in other particulars the two men were most unlike. Herndon was five feet nine, Lincoln more than six feet three. Herndon was impetuous, Lincoln extremely deliberate and cautious to a fault. Herndon was a good judge of human nature and excelled in cross-examination, while he failed in the careful preparation of his cases; Lincoln was a very poor judge of human nature, but reduced his cases to simple principles, and carefully worked up his evidence with deliberate care. Herndon was a great reader; Lincoln seldom read a book through. Herndon spent his money for books and had a valuable library; Lincoln seldom wasted a dollar on a book. Herndon was outspoken; Lincoln was secretive. Herndon wanted all the world to know what he thought about everything; Lincoln kept his ear to the ground and chose his own time for the utterance of his convictions.

We shall never have another as good description of Abraham Lincoln's appearance and manner as that which comes from the pen of Herndon, nor shall we ever obtain better pen pictures of many of the incidents in his career. But Herndon was too good a witness to be a good judge, and he lived too near the stump to behold the tree.

Herndon had already attempted to catechize Dr. Smith,[38] Mr. Lincoln's pastor, concerning his relations with Lincoln, and Smith had replied that he was willing to tell what he knew about Lincoln's faith, but did not choose to make Mr. Herndon his vehicle of communication to the public. This did not tend to increase Herndon's love for the clergy: and when Dr. Holland printed Dr. Reed's lecture, with its letters in which several of the men whom Lamon, on Herndon's authority, had quoted in support of Lamon's declaration, Herndon quickly replied and Holland refused to print his article.

Herndon spilled much ink through a New York newspaper whose editor later was sent to prison for the circulation of obscene literature, and wrote a number of letters, in each of which he tended to become a little more pronounced.

He scorned the idea that Lincoln had taken strangers into his confidence concerning his faith. He said in a letter to J. E. Remsburg, under date of September 10, 1887, "He was the most secretive, reticent, shut-mouthed man that ever existed."

The Reed lecture infuriated him. He denounced Dr. Reed publicly as a liar, and said many things which a more prudent man would not have said. On November 9, 1882, he issued a broadside, entitled "A Card and a Correction," beginning:

"I wish to say a few short words to the public and private ear. About the year 1870 I wrote a letter to Mr. F. E. Abbott, then of Ohio, touching Mr. Lincoln's religion.[39] In that letter I stated that Mr. Lincoln was an infidel, sometimes bordering on atheism, and I now repeat the same. In the year 1873, the Right Rev. James A. Reed, pastor and liar of this city, gave a lecture on Mr. Lincoln's religion, in which he tried

to answer me,—" and more to the same purport.

While Herndon and Lamon were men of quite different, mind and ability, the two men used essentially the same body of material for the making of their books about Lincoln, Herndon having sold copies of all his Lincoln manuscripts to Lamon.

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Herndon delivered at least three lectures on Lincoln. The first, and most popular and valuable, was on the "Life and Character of Lincoln." It was first delivered to a Springfield audience in 1866, was repeated many times, and it forms the substance of the twentieth chapter of his book, as it appeared in the first edition, and the eleventh chapter in the second. It contains the incomparable description of Lincoln's personal appearance which must stand to all time as the best and final pen-picture of the man.

The second was entitled "Abraham Lincoln; Miss Ann Rutledge; New Salem; the Poem." It was delivered in the old Sangamon County court house in Springfield in November, 1866, and was based on notes which Herndon had recently made on a visit to New Salem, Sunday and Monday, October 14-15, 1866. It contains the material out of which all subsequent romantic works about Lincoln and Ann Rutledge have been woven. It was heard by a small audience, greeted with manifest disapproval, and came near to being hopelessly lost; but is preserved in a limited edition published by H. E. Barker, Springfield. This edition is quoted in part in the foregoing pages, with special reference to Herndon's personal touch with New Salem.

The third was on "The Religion of Abraham Lincoln," and was called out by the Holland biography and the

Bateman interview. Of this and the first, Mr. Barker says in his preface to the Ann Rutledge lecture, that they "were allowed to perish for lack of permanence in printed form. Their subject-matter, however, was embodied in the extended Life of Lincoln published in 1872 by Ward H. Lamon, and in the still later Life of Lincoln written and published by Mr. Herndon in 1889."

This material is quoted practically *in extenso* in the pages of this volume, no important statement having been omitted.

Herndon's regret increased that he had sold to Lamon the copies of his papers. He was in a position where he was getting most of the blame for what Lamon had written, and he was not wholly in sympathy with Lamon's and especially with Black's point of view. Lamon's proposed new edition, with the new volume that was to have covered the years of Lincoln's Presidency, did not materialize. There was probably no publisher who dared undertake it. At length Herndon got to work on his own biography of Lincoln, and was fortunate in associating with himself Mr. Jesse W. Weik, who helped him to complete it. The work was published in 1889 by Belford, Clarke, & Company, of Chicago, and made its appearance in three volumes. Soon after its publication the firm failed. The books were hawked about for a song, the greater part of the edition was unsold, and the balance of the edition is alleged to have been bought up by Lincoln's friends and destroyed. The author of this book paid $35.00 for his set, and could sell it at a profit.

It is a great pity that Herndon had not learned his lesson from the fate of Lamon's book. If he had omitted some of the objectionable matter, he would

have made for himself a great name. Even as it was, he did a great piece of work: but he gained neither money nor commendation.

In 1892, Appletons brought out a new edition in two volumes, with some matter omitted, and some new matter by Horace White, and that edition met with favor. But Herndon did not live to see it. He died, poor and battle-scarred, denounced as the maligner of the man he loved.

In his younger days, Herndon drank, and it is alleged that in his later life he used morphine. It is said that he wanted an appointment to a Government Land Office, but that Lincoln, knowing his weakness, did not appoint him, and that this had some share in his feeling, which he still thought to be one of reverence for Lincoln, but which was unconsciously tinged with resentment. To this it is answered that Lincoln did offer Herndon an appointment which Herndon declined: but it was not a very attractive appointment, and there is good reason to believe that Herndon was disappointed, and that he knew Lincoln's reason.

The name which Herndon applied to Lincoln he accepted for himself, that of infidel. Yet it is fair to ask whether this was a just term as applied to Herndon himself. In his lecture on Ann Rutledge, he had occasion to defend himself in advance for views which he knew would be heard with suspicion, and which, indeed, like almost everything he said and did, had the unfortunate quality of increasing his unpopularity, he said:

> "You know my Religion, my Philosophy: That the highest thought and acts of the human soul and its

> religious sphere are to think, love, obey, and worship God, by thinking freely, by loving, teaching, doing good to, and elevating mankind. My first duty is to God, then to mankind, and then to the individual man or woman."—*Lecture on Ann Rutledge*, pp. 9-10.

One cannot help regretting that the man who had thus defined his own religion should ever have been led to think himself or any other man whom he supposed to be like-minded an infidel.

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CHAPTER XII

LINCOLN'S BURNT BOOK

IN the chapter on the "Conditions of Lincoln's Young Manhood at New Salem" mention was made of the "book" which Lincoln is said to have written, opposed to the Christian religion, a book which his employer, Samuel Hill, is said to have snatched from his hand and thrown into the fire lest Lincoln's infidelity should ruin his political career. To have treated this subject at length would have thrown that chapter out of focus, and it is time that we should learn the truth about it.

Colonel Lamon tells us about this book thus:

> "He had made himself thoroughly familiar with the writings of Paine and Volney,—the *Ruins* by one and the *Age of Reason* by the other. His mind was full of the subject, and he felt an itching to write. He did write, and the result was a 'little book.' It was probably merely an extended essay,[40] but it was ambitiously spoken of as a 'book' by himself and by the persons who were made acquainted with its contents. In this book he intended to demonstrate,—
>
> > "First, that the Bible was not God's revelation; and
> > "Secondly, that Jesus was not

the Son of God."

—LAMON, *Life of Lincoln*, pp. 157-58.

Lamon wrote this in 1872 of a book supposed to have been written by Lincoln and burned by Hill in 1834.

We have already quoted from Herndon's account, but it is brief and for convenience will bear reading here in full:

> "In 1834, while still living in New Salem and before he became a lawyer, he was surrounded by a class of people exceedingly liberal in matters of religion. Volney's *Ruins* and Paine's *Age of Reason* passed from hand to hand, and furnished food for the evening's discussion in the tavern and village store. Lincoln read both these books and thus assimilated them into his own being. He prepared an extended essay—called by many a book—in which he made an argument against Christianity, striving to prove that the Bible was not inspired, and therefore not God's revelation, and that Jesus Christ was not the Son of God. The manuscript containing these audacious and comprehensive propositions he intended to have published or given a wide circulation in some other way. He carried it to the store, where it was read and freely discussed. His friend

> and employer, Samuel Hill, was among the listeners, and seriously questioning the propriety of a promising young man like Lincoln fathering such unpopular notions, he snatched the manuscript from his hands and thrust it into the stove. The book went up in flames, and Lincoln's political future was secure."—HERNDON, III, 439, 440.

Mr. Herndon had already given this information to Lamon in another form, and Lamon used it in his list of certificates from Lincoln's old friends that Lincoln was an infidel.

As printed in Lamon's book, Herndon's account of the burnt manuscript was communicated in the following letter:

> "As to Mr. Lincoln's religious views, he was, in short, an infidel, ... a theist. He did not believe that Jesus was God, nor the Son of God,—was a fatalist, denied the freedom of the will. Mr. Lincoln told me a thousand times, that he did not believe the Bible was the revelation of God, as the Christian world contends. The points that Mr. Lincoln tried to demonstrate [in his book] were: First, That the Bible was not God's revelation; and, Second, That Jesus was not the Son of God. I assert this on my own knowledge, and on my veracity. Judge Logan, John T. Stuart, James H. Matheny, and

> others, will tell you the truth. I say they will confirm what I say, with this exception,—they will make it blacker than I remember it. Joshua F. Speed of Louisville, I think, will tell you the same thing."—LAMON, *Life of Lincoln*, p. 489.

It is important to notice that we do not have two witnesses concerning this book, but only one. Lamon gives no evidence of having possessed any independent knowledge of the book. His information was derived from Herndon. In the chapter on "Lincoln's Young Manhood" we considered how slight was Herndon's personal connection with New Salem. The town had vanished long before he ever visited the spot, and apparently the only time he ever spent there for the purpose of study was a Sunday afternoon and Monday morning, October 14 and 15, 1866. On the occasion of that visit he gathered the material for his lecture on Ann Rutledge. So far as we have evidence, he learned nothing at this time about Lincoln's burnt book. In his letter, written to be included in Lamon's biography, in which reference to this book is made, he says: "I assert this on my own knowledge and on my own veracity." That sentence appears at first reading to refer to Herndon's personal knowledge of the book, but a second reading with the context shows that Herndon does not mean to claim that he had personal knowledge of the book, but personal knowledge of Lincoln's belief or the lack of it.

Where did Herndon learn about this book?

He learned it from James H. Matheny, who had never seen the "book" but had received the information in confidence from Lincoln. It will be

remembered that Matheny repudiated the supposed letter to Herndon which Lamon printed as from him and said that he never wrote it, but that Herndon compiled it from scraps of several conversations, and that it did not represent Matheny's opinion of Lincoln's ultimate religion. It is not necessary to suppose that either Herndon or Lamon intended to misrepresent Matheny. Lamon had no original documents to work from and the copy which he received of Herndon's notes of Matheny's conversation he took to be the copy of a letter from Matheny and printed it as such. It appears to be quite clear that this was the only source of Herndon's knowledge of Lincoln's burnt book. The following is the report of these scraps of conversation with Matheny as Herndon wrote them down and as Lamon printed them:

> "I knew Mr. Lincoln as early as 1834-5; know he was an infidel. He and W. D. Herndon used to talk infidelity in the clerk's office in this city, about the years 1837-40. Lincoln attacked the Bible and the New Testament on two grounds: first, from the inherent or apparent contradictions under its lids; second, from the grounds of reason. Sometimes he ridiculed the Bible and New Testament, sometimes seemed to scoff it, though I shall not use that word in its full and literal sense. I never heard that Lincoln changed his views, though his personal and political friend from 1834 to 1860. Sometimes Lincoln

bordered on atheism. He went far that way, and often shocked me. I was then a young man and believed what my good mother told me. Stuart & Lincoln's office was in what was called Hoffman's Row, on North Fifth Street, near the public square. It was in the same building as the clerk's office, and on the same floor. Lincoln would come into the clerk's office, where I and some young men —Evan Butler, Newton Francis, and others—were writing or staying, and would bring the Bible with him; would read a chapter; argue against it. Lincoln then had a smattering of geology, if I recollect it. Lincoln often, if not wholly, was an atheist; at least, bordered on it. Lincoln was enthusiastic in his infidelity. As he grew older, he grew more discreet, didn't talk much before strangers about his religion; but to friends, close and bosom ones, he was always open and avowed, fair and honest; but to strangers, he held them off from policy. Lincoln used to quote Burns. Burns helped Lincoln to be an infidel, as I think; at least, he found in Burns a like thinker and feeler. Lincoln quoted 'Tam o' Shanter.' 'What! send one to heaven, and ten to hell!' etc.

"From what I know of Mr. Lincoln and his views of Christianity, and from what I know as honest and

> well-founded rumor; from what I have heard his best friends say and regret for years; from what he never denied when accused, and from what Lincoln hinted and intimated, to say no more—he did write a little book on infidelity at or near New Salem, in Menard County, about the year 1834 or 1835. I have stated these things to you often. Judge Logan, John T. Stuart, yourself, know what I know, and some of you more.
>
> "Mr. Herndon, you insist on knowing something which you know I possess, and got as a secret, and that is, about Lincoln's little book on infidelity. Mr. Lincoln did tell me that he did write a little book on infidelity. This statement I have avoided heretofore; but, as you strongly insist upon it,—probably to defend yourself against charges of misrepresentation,—I give it to you as I got it from Lincoln's mouth."—LAMON, *Life of Lincoln*, pp. 487-88.

We have here our one witness that Mr. Lincoln while at New Salem,[41] freshly risen from the reading of Volney and Paine, and having what Lamon called the "itch for writing" wrote some kind of essay adverse to the doctrines of Christianity as Lincoln then understood them. Matheny never saw the book and never talked with anyone so far as we know who had seen it, excepting Lincoln himself, who told him in confidence that he had written such an essay. The

fact that Matheny says that he "got it as a secret" would seem to indicate that Lincoln had no pride in it, and his reference to Herndon's insistence indicates that Herndon had no other source of information.

Lincoln did, then, write something of this character and it may have been burned; though it is extremely doubtful whether it met so spectacular a fate or was anything like so formidable a document as tradition has represented it.

It will be noted that Colonel Matheny says nothing about the burning of the book. Herndon got that item from some other source, and apparently misunderstood it. This information, apparently, Herndon picked up on the occasion of his visit to New Salem. Samuel Hill may, indeed, have reminded Lincoln that if he intended to run for the Legislature against Peter Cartwright, it would be better for him not to be known as an infidel; and indeed if Lincoln was known as an infidel, Peter Cartwright was not the man to have failed to remind him of it. But at the time when Samuel Hill snatched something out of Lincoln's hand and threw it into the fire he was not concerned so much about Lincoln's political future as he was about something else. The document which Samuel Hill burned contained very little about theology.

When on an evening in November, 1866, Mr. Herndon, but lately returned from his visit to the site of New Salem, delivered in the old court house in Springfield before a small and critical audience his lecture on Ann Rutledge, he informed his hearers that in 1834 that sweet young girl of nineteen was simultaneously loved by three men, one of whom was Abraham Lincoln. He omitted the names of the other two, and filled in their place in the manuscript

with blanks. The world has long since learned the other two names, of John McNamur and Samuel Hill. Herndon's reason for concealing them at the time was probably the fact that their descendants were living near, but those descendants are well aware of it now, and have been for years.

Hill and McNamur were partners, and Ann loved McNamur and rejected Hill. McNamur went East, and was gone so long that it was believed he was either dead or had proved untrue, and Hill's hope lit up again only to meet a second disappointment. Ann Rutledge still loved McNamur, but, believing him forever lost to her, she had made her second choice, and that choice was not Hill. Hill awoke to the sad discovery that having once been refused for his partner's sake he was refused again for the sake of his clerk. This shy, gawky, lank, and ill-mannered young fellow who was selling goods in Hill's store and studying law and cherishing all manner of ambitions had aspired to the hand of Ann Rutledge and had been accepted.

The truth about it came out in the discovery of a letter which Hill had written to McNamur. Hill was making one last effort to learn whether McNamur was living or dead, and if living whether he still loved Ann; and was reproaching him for his delay and neglect. This letter did not find its way to the post office; in some way it was lost and was picked up by the children who brought it to Lincoln. This was the document which Lincoln held in his hand when he and Hill came to their final reckoning concerning the heart of Ann Rutledge; and the argument between them, while friendly, developed some heat, and that was what Hill snatched from Lincoln's hand and threw into the fire.

As for the book or essay or whatever it may have been in which Lincoln passed on his undigested reading of Volney and Paine, we do not know what became of that, nor need we greatly care. It went the way of a good deal of literature which Lincoln was producing at this time, probably with no dream that any of it would ever see a printing-press. It is hardly credible that Lincoln, who never printed a book even in his maturer years, should have had serious purpose of printing this particular bit of half-fledged philosophy.

But we have knowledge, and very direct knowledge, of something else which Lincoln wrote at this time. We learn of it not by any such circuitous route of hearsay evidence as accompanies the story of the so-called book on infidelity. We learn of it from a man who received it at Lincoln's hands and who read it and remembered its contents and was a competent witness not only as to the production of the book, but also as to its argument. This is none other than Mentor Graham, the schoolmaster of New Salem, who introduced Lincoln to Kirkham's Grammar, who taught Lincoln surveying, who had Lincoln in his home as a lodger, and who knew more about Lincoln's religious views during his years at New Salem than any other man who lived to tell the world about it after Lincoln's death. In Irwin's article, which we have already quoted, is found this letter from Mentor Graham.

Mentor Graham is a much better witness than either Mr. Herndon or Colonel Matheny,—better because equally honest, and a man of less violent prejudices and of more sober habits, and especially because he had direct personal knowledge of the facts. In his letter to Mr. Irwin, under date of March 17, 1874,

Mentor Graham relates that when Lincoln was living in Graham's house in New Salem in 1833, studying English grammar and surveying under this good schoolmaster, Lincoln one morning said to him:

"Graham, what do you think of the anger of the Lord?"

Graham replied, "I believe the Lord never was angry or mad, and never will be; that His loving kindness endureth forever, and that He never changes."

Lincoln said, "I have a little manuscript written which I will show you."

The manuscript was written on foolscap paper, about a half-quire in size, and was written in a plain hand. Mentor read it.

"It was a defense of universal salvation. The commencement of it was something about the God of the universe never being excited, mad, or angry. I had the manuscript in my possession some week or ten days. I have read many books on the subject, and I don't think in point of perspicacity and plainness of reasoning I ever read one to surpass it. I remember well his argument. He took the passage, 'As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive,' and followed with the proposition that whatever the breach or injury of Adam's transgression to the human race was, which no doubt was very great, was made right by the atonement of Christ."

On this point, then, we have abundant witness. Lincoln argued from the fall of man to the redemptive work of Christ as the Baptist preachers were in the habit of doing, but instead of finding there the basis of an argument for individual election and particular salvation or damnation, found in it the

basis of faith in universal salvation.

How Lincoln can have reconciled this kind of reasoning with his readings from Thomas Paine can be understood by those who have read Paine—which most men who discuss him have not—and who know the form of argument of the backwoods preachers which Lincoln had known all his life and little else in the way of reasoned discourse in spiritual things. His line of argument was a not unnatural resultant of the forces at work in his mind.

But what about the book which Hill burned?

Here again we have the personal knowledge of Mentor Graham. He was not, indeed, actually present when the manuscript was burned. No one, probably, was present, except Hill and Lincoln. But Graham was very much nearer to the event in point both of time and distance than either Herndon or Matheny, from whom Herndon learned about it, and learned incorrectly.

What Hill snatched from Lincoln's hand and burned was a letter which Hill had written to McNamur about Ann Rutledge. The letter was lost and picked up by the school children, who brought it to Lincoln, the postmaster. Lincoln, knowing Hill's handwriting, and guessing the nature of the letter, kept it to discuss with Hill alone; and they did discuss it together. Hill was demanding of McNamur that he either come back to New Salem, or release Ann Rutledge from her engagement; and what he learned was, that his successful rival was not now McNamur, but Lincoln. Here is what Graham says about it:

"Some of the school children had picked up the letter and handed it to Lincoln. Hill and Lincoln were talking about it, when Hill snatched the letter from

Lincoln and put it into the fire. The letter was respecting a young lady, Miss Ann Rutledge, for whom all three of these gentlemen seemed to have respect."

Graham lived in New Salem at the time that this incident occurred. Neither Herndon nor Matheny lived there. Graham left New Salem when it ceased to be a town, and spent the remainder of his life among the people who had been his neighbors in New Salem and who became residents with him in the near-by town of Petersburg. Graham had direct access to the facts.

The reason why it was not much talked about is evident enough. Hill, McNamur, and Lincoln all married, and their wives and children were living not far from where these events occurred. The triangular misunderstanding of three young men about a young woman who had died many years before was a matter for quiet gossip on the part of the older inhabitants, but it did not come to the general knowledge of the public until Herndon delivered his unwelcome lecture on Ann Rutledge. In some things he learned and told the truth. But his material had been too hastily gathered, and was too quickly rushed into a lecture to be reliable in all respects, and it requires about four titles to cover its diversified and unstratified subject-matter.

Our knowledge of the burnt book is, therefore, a matter in which we come finally to the remote recollection of James Matheny on the one hand, who never saw the book, and who manifestly misunderstood some parts of the story, and the close and intimate knowledge of Mentor Graham on the other. Lincoln apparently told Matheny in confidence that he while he was living in Salem wrote an essay

against the Christian religion, and Matheny regarded it as a secret but told it to Herndon. Herndon heard some gossip about a manuscript which Hill burned, and thought it to have been the same. Mentor Graham had reliable information as to what it was that Hill burned, and moreover knew from his own personal knowledge that Lincoln wrote a very different manuscript than the one of which he told Matheny, for he himself had read it, and remembered its general nature.

Why Lincoln wrote on both sides of the same subject we do not know and it is not necessary to ask. He may have been practicing his skill in debating; he may have held one view at one time and another at another; he may have been uncertain what view he really held and have been seeking to formulate his opinions. It would not be fair to judge his mature opinion by our scant knowledge of what was contained in either of these two manuscripts. But the thing which should be remembered is that we know more about the book in favor of Christianity than we know of the book against it. Mentor Graham was a truthful and a competent witness and he had both seen and read the book, which is not true of anyone through whom we have knowledge of the other essay.

We are not at liberty to draw the sharp distinction which sometimes has been drawn against the rampant infidelity of Lincoln's earlier years and the supposed orthodoxy of his mature life. Neither of these may have been as hard and fast as have sometimes been assumed. It is quite possible that Abraham Lincoln never became a Christian of the type who could have expressed his faith in the terms of the Bateman interview; it is equally possible that

even in those callow years when he was reading Tom Paine and Volney and writing sub-sophomoric effusions on things he knew little about, the germ of religious faith was actually present even in his doubt.

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CHAPTER XIII

"THE CHRISTIAN'S DEFENCE"

IN the spring of the year 1850, after the death of their little son Eddie, Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln visited Mrs. Lincoln's relatives in Kentucky. While they were on this visit, Mr. Lincoln picked up a book entitled *The Christian's Defence*, by Rev. James Smith. He was interested, for Dr. Smith was a townsman of his, and in the absence of Mrs. Lincoln's rector Dr. Smith had conducted the little boy's funeral service in the Lincoln home. Lincoln read a part but not the whole of the book while on this visit. Dr. Smith, as the book showed, had himself been a doubter, but had become convinced of the truth of the Christian religion, and had become a valiant defender of the faith, and an eager debater with skeptics. Out of a three weeks' discussion with one of these this book had grown.

On his return to Springfield Mr. Lincoln took occasion to secure the book, and to cultivate a closer acquaintance with its author.

Lincoln found him well worth knowing; and the reader of this book deserves an introduction to him and his work.

I have obtained from Miss Jeanette E. Smith, of Springfield, granddaughter of Rev. James Smith, a considerable body of manuscript and other material relating to her grandfather.

James Smith was born in Glasgow, Scotland, May 11, 1801, and died in Scotland July 3, 1871. He was the

son of Peter and Margaret Smith. In youth he was wild, and in his opinions was a deist; but when converted he became a fearless defender of the faith. He was a big, brainy man, with a great voice and with positive convictions. He was called from Shelbyville, Kentucky, to the First Church of Springfield, his pastorate beginning March 14, 1849, and closing December 17, 1856.

He was a strong temperance man. His sermon on "The Bottle, Its Evils and Its Remedy," from Habakkuk 2:15, was preached on January 23, 1853, and printed at the request of thirty-nine men who heard it, Abraham Lincoln being one of those who signed the request. "Friends of Temperance" they called themselves. I have a copy of this remarkable sermon. In one part it essayed a vindication of the distiller and liquor-seller, affirming that a community that licensed them had no right to abuse them for doing what they had paid for the privilege of doing; and that the State with money in its pocket received as a share in the product of drunkenness had no right to condemn the saloonkeeper for his share in the partnership. He called on the Legislature then in session to pass a prohibitory law, forbidding all sale of intoxicating liquor except for medical, mechanical, and sacramental purposes.

Such sermons became abundant forty years afterward, but they were not abundant in 1853. Dr. Smith was one of the men who held these convictions, and Abraham Lincoln was one of the men who wanted to see them printed and circulated.

It is remarkable that all knowledge of the massive book which Dr. Smith wrote and published should have perished from Springfield. Lamon manifestly knew nothing of it as a book, but thought of it as a

manuscript tract, prepared especially for the ambitious business of converting Mr. Lincoln. His sarcastic description implies this, and Herndon, who may have known better at the time, had apparently forgotten. Both men were disqualified for the discussion of it by their ignorance of it, as well as the violence of their prejudice.

On February 12, 1909, a service was held in the old First Presbyterian Church in Springfield, then occupied by the Lutherans, the Presbyterians having erected a larger building. The address was given by Rev. Thomas D. Logan, Dr. Smith's successor, whose pastorate had begun in 1888. In all the more than twenty years of his ministry in Springfield, he had never seen this book. He had never known of it as a book at the time he wrote the first draft of this centenary address. The substance of the address he sent in advance as an article for the Lincoln Number of *The Continent* in February, 1909; but in the revision of the proof he inserted a footnote saying that Dr. Smith's granddaughter, Miss Jeanette E. Smith, had come into possession of a copy of her grandfather's book, which he had just seen.

The prime reason for this complete ignorance of the book, even in the church which Lincoln attended, is that it was published six years before Dr. Smith came to Springfield, in a limited edition, and completely sold out before it came from the press; so that it never came into general circulation in Springfield.

Miss Smith has placed at my disposal her own copy of this book, which was her grandfather's, and I have been able to locate about a half-dozen copies in various public libraries, and by rare good fortune to buy one for myself.

Dr. Smith's statement was made in a letter from

Cainno, Scotland, dated January 24, 1867:

> "It was my honor to place before Mr. Lincoln arguments designed to prove the divine authority and inspiration of the Scriptures, accompanied by the arguments of infidel objectors in their own language. To the arguments on both sides Mr. Lincoln gave a most patient, impartial, and searching investigation. To use his own language, he examined the arguments as a lawyer who is anxious to investigate truth investigates testimony. The result was the announcement made by himself that the argument in favor of the divine authority and inspiration of the Scriptures was unanswerable."—REV. JAMES A. REED: "The Later Life and Religious Sentiments of Abraham Lincoln," *Scribner's Magazine*, July, 1873, p. 333.

Mr. Thomas Lewis, a lawyer whose office adjoined that of Mr. Lincoln in Springfield, and who for a time was in the same office, was an elder in the church which Lincoln attended. In 1898 he wrote his recollections of Dr. Smith's book and its influence upon Mr. Lincoln:

> "I was an elder, trustee, treasurer, collector, superintendent of the Sunday school, and pew-renter. The following Tuesday, after the second Sunday, Mr. Lincoln called on me

and inquired if there were any pews to rent in the church. I replied, 'Yes, and a very desirable one, vacated by Governor Madison, who has just left the city.' 'What is the rent?' said he. 'Fifty dollars, payable quarterly.' He handed me $12.50. Said he, 'Put it down to me.' From that date he paid each three months on said pew until he left for Washington; and from the first Sunday he was there I have not known of his not occupying that pew every Sunday he was in the city until he left. The seat was immediately in front of mine. The third Sunday his children came in the Sunday school.

"Shortly thereafter there was a revival in the church, and Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln, when he was in the city, attended meeting. In his absence she was there. They attended not only the regular meetings, but the inquiry meetings also, and it was the belief that both would unite with the church. When the candidates were examined Mr. Lincoln was in Detroit, prosecuting a patent right case, a branch of the profession in which he had acquired an enviable reputation. Mrs. Lincoln stated that she was confirmed in the Episcopal Church when twelve years of age, but did not wish to join the church by letter, but upon profession of faith, as she was never converted until Dr. Smith's preaching. She was

> admitted [1852]. Mr. Lincoln never applied. Some months later the session of the church invited Mr. Lincoln to deliver a lecture on the Bible. When it became known that Mr. Lincoln was to lecture in the Presbyterian church it assured a full house. It was said by divines and others to be the ablest defense of the Bible ever uttered in that pulpit.
>
> "From the introduction of Mr. Lincoln to Dr. Smith their intimacy was of a most cordial character. At their last meeting previous to Mr. Lincoln's leaving for Washington, as they parted, Mr. Lincoln said, 'Doctor, I wish to be remembered in the prayers of yourself and our church members.'"—*Illinois State Register*, December 10, 1898.

A very interesting bit of testimony to the relations of Mr. Lincoln and his pastor, Dr. Smith, was given by Rev. William Bishop, D.D., in an address at Salina, Kansas, on February 12, 1897, and published in the local papers at the time. Dr. Bishop was graduated from Illinois College in 1850, and for a time was a member of the faculty there. In the summer after his graduation, he supplied Dr. Smith's pulpit during his vacation:

> "I first met Dr. Smith in the summer of 1850 in Jacksonville, at the commencement exercises of Illinois College, from which I had graduated and had just been appointed a

member of the faculty of instruction. The acquaintance then formed ripened into mutual and congenial friendship. And during the two years of my connection with the college I was frequently a visitor and guest at his house in Springfield, and when, by reason of removal to another institution in another State, the visits were fewer and farther between, 'a free epistolary correspondence' continued to strengthen and brighten the links of fellowship. With his other accomplishments, Dr. Smith was an interesting and instructive conversationalist—in fact, quite a raconteur, somewhat like his friend Lincoln, always ready with a story to illustrate his opinions, and which gave piquancy to his conversation. Whenever he had occasion to speak of Lincoln he always evinced the strongest attachment and the warmest friendship for him, which was known to be fully reciprocated. Democrat as he was, and tinged with Southern hues—though never a secessionist—there seemed to be a mystic cord uniting the minister and the lawyer. This was subsequently beautifully shown on the part of Mr. Lincoln, who never forgot to do a generous thing. When he was elected President Dr. Smith and wife were getting old, their children all

married and gone, except their youngest[42] son, a young man of twenty-three or four years of age. One of Lincoln's first official acts, after his inauguration, was the appointment of this young man to the consulate at Dundee, Scotland. The doctor, with his wife and son, returned to the land of his birth. The son soon returned to America, and Dr. Smith himself was appointed consul, which position he retained until his death in 1871.

"In the spring of 1857 Dr. Smith, anticipating a necessary absence from his church of two or three months during the summer, invited me to supply his pulpit until his return. Being young and inexperienced in the ministry, with considerable hesitation I accepted his urgent invitation. So I spent my college vacation performing as best I could this service. Mr. Lincoln was a regular attendant at church and evidently an attentive hearer and devout worshiper.

"As a college student I had seen and heard him and looked up to him as a being towering above common men; and, I confess, I was not a little intimidated by his presence as he sat at the end of a seat well forward toward the pulpit, with his deep eyes fixed upon me, and his long legs

stretched out in the middle aisle to keep them from [using one of his own colloquialisms] being scrouged in the narrow space between the pews. My 'stage fright,' however, was soon very much relieved by his kindliness and words of encouragement.

"On a certain Sunday, the third, as I recollect it, in my term of service, I delivered a discourse on the text, 'Without God in the World.' The straight translation from the Greek is, 'Atheists in the World.' In discussing atheism, theoretical and practical, I endeavored to elucidate and enforce the fallacy of the one and the wickedness of the other. At the close of the service Mr. Lincoln came up and, putting his right hand in mine and his left on my shoulder, with other impressive remarks, said, 'I can say "Amen" to all that you have said this morning.' From that time on my interest in him grew apace.

"He was then known extensively all over the West as a great and good man, and only a year afterward he bounded into national fame by his victory in the great debate with Douglas, who, up to that time, was regarded as a debater invincible.

"During my brief sojourn in Springfield I had many opportunities

of meeting Lincoln, hearing him, and talking with him at home, in church, in society, and in the courts of justice.

"Dr. Smith returned in due time to resume his pastoral functions. In reporting to him, in general, my labors in the church as his substitute during his absence, and in particular my conceptions of Lincoln's religious character, he intimated that he knew something of Lincoln's private personal religious experiences, feelings, and beliefs which resulted in his conversion to the Christian faith. After some urging to be more explicit, he made the following statement, which is herewith submitted, couched substantially in his own language. The doctor said:

"'I came to Springfield to take the pastoral charge of this church [First Presbyterian] about eight years ago [1849]. During the first of these years, I might say, I had only a speaking or general acquaintance with Mr. Lincoln [then forty years old]. Two or three years previous to my coming here Mrs. Lincoln, who had been a member of our church, for some reason changed her church relations and was a regular attendant at the services of the Episcopal Church. Mr. Lincoln, at that time, having no denominational

preferences, went with her. And so the family continued to frequent the sanctuary for a year or more after I began my ministry here. The occasion which opened up the way to my intimate relations to Mr. Lincoln was this, viz.: In the latter part of 1849 death came into his family. His second son died at about three or four years of age. The rector, an excellent clergyman, being temporarily absent, could not be present to conduct the burial service, and I was called to officiate at the funeral. This led me to an intimate acquaintance with the family, and grew into an enduring and confidential friendship between Mr. Lincoln and myself. One result was that the wife and mother returned to her ancestral church, and the husband and father very willingly came with her, and ever since has been a constant attendant upon my ministry. I found him very much depressed and downcast at the death of his son, and without the consolation of the gospel. Up to this time I had heard but little concerning his religious views, and that was to the effect that he was a deist and inclined to skepticism as to the divine origin of the Scriptures, though, unlike most skeptics, he had evidently been a constant reader of the Bible. I found him an honest and

anxious inquirer. He gradually revealed the state of his mind and heart, and at last unbosomed his doubts and struggles and unrest of soul. In frequent conversations I found that he was perplexed and unsettled on the fundamentals of religion, by speculative difficulties, connected with Providence and revelation, which lie beyond and above the legitimate province of religion. With some suggestions bearing on the right attitude required for impartial investigation, I placed in his hands my book (*The Christian's Defence*) on the evidence of Christianity, which gives the arguments for and against the divine authority and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. Mr. Lincoln took the book, and for a number of weeks, as a lawyer, examined and weighed the evidence, pro and con, and judged of the credibility of the contents of revelation. And while he was investigating I was praying that the Spirit of Truth might lead him into the kingdom of truth. And such was the result, for at the conclusion of his examination he came forth his doubts scattered to the winds and his reason convinced by the arguments in support of the inspired and infallible authority of the Old and New Testaments—a believer in God, in His providential

> government, in His Son, the way, the truth, and the life, and from that time [nearly seven years] to this day his life has proved the genuineness of his conversion to the Christian faith. For this I humbly ascribe to our heavenly Father the honor and the glory.'"

In an earlier statement than that previously quoted, Mr. Thomas Lewis, under date of January 6, 1873, said:

> "Not long after Dr. Smith came to Springfield, and I think very near the time of his son's death, Mr. Lincoln said to me that when on a visit somewhere he had seen and partially read a work of Dr. Smith on the evidences of Christianity, which had led him to change his view of the Christian religion, and he would like to get that work and finish the reading of it, and also to make the acquaintance of Dr. Smith. I was an elder in Dr. Smith's church, and took Dr. Smith to Mr. Lincoln's office, and Dr. Smith gave Mr. Lincoln a copy of his book, as I know, at his own request."

This is a very different story from that which Lamon tells, of a self-advertising preacher, ostentatiously preparing a tract to convert Mr. Lincoln, and thrusting it upon him uninvited and thereafter to be neglected.

That Mr. Lincoln was impressed by the book is as certain as human testimony can make it. He told Dr. Smith that he regarded its argument as "unanswerable," and Lamon's slighting remark will not stand against so emphatic a word.

Moreover, Hon. John T. Stuart, whom Lamon had quoted as saying, "The Rev. Dr. Smith, who wrote a letter, tried to convert Lincoln as late as 1858, and couldn't do it," repudiated that statement, declared he never had said it; and on the contrary affirmed that he understood from those who had reason to know that Dr. Smith's book had produced a change in the mind of Mr. Lincoln.

Ninian W. Edwards, Mr. Lincoln's brother-in-law, on December 24, 1872, entered the discussion with this emphatic statement:

> "A short time after the Rev. Dr. Smith became pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in this city, Mr. Lincoln said to me, 'I have been reading a work of Dr. Smith on the evidences of Christianity, and have heard him preach and converse on the subject, and am now convinced of the truth of the Christian religion.'"

Just what doctrines he was convinced were true, we may not know. But we do know that he requested the book and declared it unanswerable, that he and his wife changed their church affiliation and he became a regular attendant, that Dr. Smith became his friend and was honored and recognized by him as long as Lincoln lived, and that those who knew Lincoln best were told by him that some change had

come in his own belief.

Under these conditions, the word and work of Rev. James Smith are not to be thrown unceremoniously out of court. They have standing in any fair consideration of the question of Lincoln's religious faith.

I have looked through many Lives of Lincoln to discover whether any biographer of Lincoln had ever looked up this book, and thus far have not discovered any. I have inquired for the book at the Chicago Historical Library and the Illinois Historical Library, and neither of those libraries contains it, nor had it been thought of in connection with Lincoln. Mr. Oldroyd does not have it in his matchless collection, where I hoped I might find the veritable copy that Lincoln read, and he had never heard of it; nor does the matron of the Lincoln Home at Springfield know anything about it.[43]

I shall give in the Appendix of this book an outline of the contents of Dr. Smith's solid work, that the reader may judge for himself whether such a book, placed in the hands of Mr. Lincoln at such a time, may not have had upon his mind all the influence that Dr. Smith ever claimed for it.

CHAPTER XIV

"VESTIGES OF CREATION"

LINCOLN was a man of few books. Much has been made of the fact that when a lad he eagerly read every book within reach; but he did not continue that habit in his mature years. Something happened to the lad in adolescence that changed him mentally as well as physically. His sudden upshoot in stature permanently tired him; he became disinclined to activity. His movements were much slower, and his habits of thought more sluggish. Arnold attempts to make a list of his "favorite books," but does not make much progress (*Life of Lincoln*, pp. 443, 444). About all there is to be said is that he read the Bible both as a boy and man, and came to have an appreciation and love of Shakspeare, particularly *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, but he never read Shakspeare through. He was fond of some of the poems of Burns, the rollicking humor of "Tam o' Shanter," the withering scorn—an element which had a considerable place in Lincoln's nature—of "Holy Willie's Prayer," the manly democracy of "A Man's a Man for a' That"; but he never quoted Burns. He had little appreciation of music, but liked negro melodies—not the genuine ones, but the minstrel-show sort—camp-meeting ballads, Scotch songs, and mournful narrative compositions, of which the woods were moderately full in his boyhood, and which he continued to enjoy. Broadly humorous songs moved him to mirth, but he cared more for those that were sad. Everyone knows his love for the mediocre but melodious

poem, "O Why Should the Spirit of Mortal be Proud," which like the religious song he loved, "How tedious and tasteless the hours," moved mournfully in triple time, flaunting crêpe in the face of the spirit of the waltz. About the only contemporary poem which he is known to have cared much for was Holmes' "Last Leaf," in which he was particularly moved by the lines,—

"*The mossy marbles rest*

On the lips that he has prest,

In their bloom,

And the names he loved to hear

Have been carved for many a year

On the tomb."

Herndon is correct in saying that Lincoln read less and thought more than any man prominent in public life in his generation.

But the few books that Lincoln read in his mature years affected him greatly; and when we know of his reading a book because he cared for it, we may well endeavor to discover that book and inquire whether it be not possible to trace its influence in the development, slow but sure, of the mental and spiritual processes of Abraham Lincoln.

A highly important statement concerning the philosophical and religious views of Lincoln is found in Herndon's *Life of Lincoln*, and it is remarkable that neither Herndon nor any of the hundreds of writers who have gleaned, as all must glean, from his pages,

appears to have followed further the most important of its suggestions:

> "For many years I subscribed for and kept on our office table the *Westminster* and *Edinburgh Review* and a number of other English periodicals. Besides them, I purchased the works of Spencer, Darwin, and the utterances of other English scientists, all of which I devoured with great relish. I endeavored, but with little success, in inducing Lincoln to read them. Occasionally he would snatch one up and peruse it for a little while, but he soon threw it down with the suggestion that it was entirely too heavy for an ordinary mind to digest. A gentleman in Springfield gave him a book called, I believe, *Vestiges of Creation*, which interested him so much that he read it through. The volume was published in Edinburgh, and undertook to demonstrate the doctrine of development, or evolution. The treatise interested him greatly, and he was deeply impressed with the notion of the so-called 'universal law' evolution; he did not extend greatly his researches, but by continual thinking in a single channel seemed to grow into a warm advocate of the new doctrine. Beyond what I have stated he made no further advances

> into the realm of philosophy. 'There are no accidents,' he said one day, 'in my philosophy. Every effect must have its cause. The past is the cause of the present, and the present will be the cause of the future. All these are links in the endless chain stretching from the Infinite to the finite.'"—HERNDON, III, 438.

I count it remarkable that neither Herndon nor any other of Lincoln's biographers appears to have made further inquiry about this book, which is not mentioned in Herndon's index, and which I have not found referred to elsewhere in connection with Lincoln. The book is not in any of the great Lincoln collections which I have visited, nor has any Lincoln student to whom I have mentioned it had it in mind, or failed to be impressed with the value of it when we have discussed the matter.

The book itself is not in the Lincoln Home at Springfield, nor is it in the Oldroyd Collection at Washington, in one of which places I hoped that it might be found. Neither the librarian of the Illinois Historical Society in Springfield, nor Mr. Barker, the painstaking and discriminating collector and vendor of Lincoln books in Springfield, had ever noticed the title in Herndon's book, though both were at once impressed with its significance when I called it to their attention.

The material in Herndon's lectures on Lincoln is pretty well absorbed in his book, and quoted in this volume; but there are some interesting additional details in Herndon's letters. In these, answering specific questions or replying to definite statements, he now and then added a statement which was not

later included in his book, but which has present interest and in some cases value.

The following is an excerpt from a letter of Herndon to John E. Remsburg, and bears in an important way on Lincoln's use of *Vestiges of Creation*:

> "I had an excellent private library, probably the best in the city for admired books. To this library Mr. Lincoln had, as a matter of course, full and free access at all times. I purchased such books as Locke, Kant, Fichte, Lewes; Sir William Hamilton's *Discussions of Philosophy*; Spencer's *First Principles*, *Social Studies*, etc.; Buckle's *History of Civilization*, and Lecky's *History of Rationalism*. I also possessed the works of Parker, Paine, Emerson and Strauss; Gregg's *Creed of Christendom*, McNaught on *Inspiration*, Volney's *Ruins*, Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*, and other works on Infidelity. Mr. Lincoln read some of these works. About the year 1843[44] he borrowed the *Vestiges of Creation* of Mr. James W. Keys, of this city, and read it carefully. He subsequently read the sixth edition of this work, which I loaned him. He adopted the progressive and development theory as taught more or less directly in that work. He despised speculation, especially in the metaphysical world. He was purely a practical man."—

REMSBURG: *Six Historic Americans*, pp. 114-15.

As already stated Dr. Smith's book *The Christian's Defence* is excessively rare. The edition was small; the argument which it contained was modified with the progress of discovery; there was little to keep in circulation the few copies of the book that survived. They have nearly all disappeared. I have searched the second-hand shops of the principal cities and the dusty duplicates of libraries with repeated disappointment. For this reason, I have carried a complete analysis of the book into the Appendix of this volume; for few who read the present volume will be able to see the book itself.

It is quite otherwise with *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*. It was widely circulated, and copies of even the older editions are not impossible to obtain. It can be purchased, new, at very small cost.[45] But most of the editions that the reader will be likely to find, if he seeks for them, are later than the one which influenced Lincoln, and contain more or less of supplementary matter.

Before passing to another subject, it will be well to say a further word about this book, for a fuller discussion of which one may go to Andrew D. White's *Conflict of Science with Theology* and other learned works.

The author of this book was Robert Chambers,[46] one of the famous firm of publishers, and himself an author of note. He was born in Peebles, Scotland, July 10, 1802, and died at St. Andrews, March 17, 1871. He was an author as well as publisher of books. He published this book anonymously, and its authorship was not known for forty years. In 1884,

thirteen years after his death, his name appeared for the first time upon the title page of a new edition.

It was, in the author's own phrase, "the first attempt to connect the natural sciences with the history of creation."

From it Lincoln learned geology and comparative biology. In it he found not only studies of the rocks, but also of the prenatal life of man, as related in its successive stages to corresponding types in the geological world. It was, in a word, an introduction to Darwin, which appeared many years later.

That many ministers denounced it as contradictory to the Bible we know, and the author anticipated this, nor is this a matter which gives us present concern. Some ministers believed it, and others, still unconvinced, read it with an open mind and waited for more light.

The important thing for us to know and clearly recognize is that in this book Abraham Lincoln not only learned what Herndon considers, and we are justified in considering, the essential theory of evolution, but he learned that such a view of creation is consistent with faith in God and the Bible.

We shall not find it possible to overestimate the importance of this discovery. Abraham Lincoln wrought out his philosophy of creation, his scheme of cause and effect, his theory of the processes of nature and life, under influences not atheistic nor hostile to religion, but distinctly favorable to it. He learned of evolution, and was convinced of its truth, from a book whose spirit and purpose was to present the view in harmony with the Christian faith.

The second, and subsequent editions, of *Vestiges* were "Greatly Amended by the Author," as the title page

gave notice, and the changes were partly to incorporate new scientific data, but more to make clear the fact that the author's theory did not remove God from his universe, as some critics had asserted, but like Butler's *Analogy* had shown that God is in His world, working through the processes of nature. In 1846 appeared *Explanations: A Sequel to Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, a thin volume added to carry still further this double purpose, and doing it with marked success. The sixth edition combined the two in one volume.

It is interesting to learn that Lincoln, having read the first edition, later procured and read the sixth, in which the religious spirit of the author was made still more apparent.

This was the book which gave to Lincoln his theory of creation, of "miracles under law," and with one divine mind and purpose working through it all. Lincoln read little of natural science and cared practically nothing for philosophy, but he found in this book what he needed of both; and he found them in a system whose soul and center was the will of a righteous God.

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CHAPTER XV

OTHER FORMATIVE BOOKS

We do not know of any other books which deserve to be classed with the two we have been considering in their relation to the formation of Mr. Lincoln's religious ideas; but our inquiry is at a point where it will be instructive to learn of any collateral influence which at this period, the period of the 50's, after the death of Eddie, and before his election as President, helped to give shape to his convictions.

Mr. Lincoln did not unite with Dr. Smith's church. It is difficult to think that it would have been possible for him to have done so. Old-school Calvinism had its permanent influence upon him through his Baptist antecedents, but while that of Dr. Smith came to him most opportunely, it did not wholly meet his spiritual requirements.

For many years Herndon was in regular correspondence with Theodore Parker. They agreed in their view of the slavery question, and had much in common in their religion. Herndon had Parker's theological books, and Lincoln read them, not very thoroughly, perhaps, but with interest.

About the same time, Mr. Jesse W. Fell, for whom he wrote the first sketch of his life, presented him with the works of William E. Channing.

When Herndon was gathering material to confute Dr. Reed, he assembled very nearly everything that seemed to prove that Lincoln was not orthodox,

however far short it fell of proving him an infidel. Among the rest he interviewed Fell, and from his statements made up this report, which appeared in Lamon's book, and subsequently in Herndon's:

> "Mr. Jesse W. Fell of Illinois, who had the best opportunities of knowing Mr. Lincoln intimately, makes the following statement of his religious opinions, derived from repeated conversations with him on the subject:
>
> ""Though everything relating to the character and history of this extraordinary personage is of interest, and should be fairly stated to the world, I enter upon the performance of this duty—for so I regard it—with some reluctance, arising from the fact, that, in stating my convictions on the subject, I must necessarily place myself in opposition to quite a number who have written on this topic before me, and whose views largely preoccupy the public mind. This latter fact, whilst contributing to my embarrassment on this subject, is, perhaps, the strongest reason, however, why the truth in this matter should be fully disclosed; and I therefore yield to your request. If there were any traits of character that stood out in bold relief in the person of Mr. Lincoln, they were those of truth and candor. He was

utterly incapable of insincerity, or professing views on this or any other subject he did not entertain. Knowing such to be his true character, that insincerity, much more duplicity, were traits wholly foreign to his nature, many of his old friends were not a little surprised at finding, in some of the biographies of this great man, statements concerning his religious opinions so utterly at variance with his known sentiments. True, he may have changed or modified those sentiments after his removal from among us, though this is hardly reconcilable with the history of the man, and his entire devotion to public matters during his four years' residence at the national capital. It is possible, however, that this may be the proper solution of this conflict of opinions; or, it may be, that, with no intention on the part of anyone to mislead the public mind, those who have represented him as believing in the popular theological views of the times may have misapprehended him, as experience shows to be quite common where no special effort has been made to attain critical accuracy on a subject of this nature. This is the more probable from the well-known fact, that Mr. Lincoln seldom communicated to anyone his views on this subject. But, be this as it

may, I have no hesitation whatever in saying, that, whilst he held many opinions in common with the great mass of Christian believers, he did not believe in what are regarded as the orthodox or evangelical views of Christianity.

"'On the innate depravity of man, the character and office of the great Head of the Church, the atonement, the infallibility of the written revelation, the performance of miracles, the nature and design of present and future rewards and punishments (as they are probably called), and many other subjects, he held opinions utterly at variance with what are usually taught in the church. I should say that his expressed views on these and kindred topics were such as, in the estimation of most believers, would place him entirely outside the Christian pale. Yet, to my mind, such was not the true position, since his principles and practices and the spirit of his whole life were of the very kind we universally agree to call Christian; and I think this conclusion is in no wise affected by the circumstance that he never attached himself to any religious society whatever.

"'His religious views were eminently practical, and are summed up, as I

think, in these two propositions: "the Fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man." He fully believed in a superintending and overruling Providence, that guides and controls the operations of the world, but maintained that law and order, and not the violation or suspension, are the appointed means by which this providence is expressed.

"'I will not attempt any specification of either his belief or disbelief on various religious topics, as derived from conversations with him at different times during a considerable period; but, as conveying a general view of his religious or theological opinions, will state the following facts. Some eight or ten years prior to his death, in conversing with him upon this subject, the writer took occasion to refer, in terms of approbation, to the sermons and writings generally of Dr. W. E. Channing; and, finding he was considerably interested in the statement I made of the opinions held by that author, I proposed to present him [Lincoln] a copy of Channing's entire works, which I soon after did. Subsequently, the contents of these volumes, together with the writings of Theodore Parker, furnished him, as he informed me, by his friend and law

partner, Mr. Herndon, became naturally the topics of conversation with us; and though far from believing there was an entire harmony of views on his part with either of those authors, yet they were generally much admired and approved by him.

"'No religious views with him seemed to find any favor, except of the practical and rationalistic order; and if, from my recollections on this subject, I was called upon to designate an author whose views most nearly represented Mr. Lincoln's on this subject, I would say that author was Theodore Parker.

"'As you have asked from me a candid statement of my recollections on this topic, I have thus briefly given them, with the hope that they may be of some service in rightly settling a question about which—as I have good reason to believe—the public mind has been greatly misled.

"'Not doubting that they will accord, substantially, with your own recollections, and that of his other intimate and confidential friends, and with the popular verdict after this matter shall have been properly canvassed, I submit them.'"—LAMON: *Life of Lincoln*, pp. 490, 491, 492.

Herndon was attempting to collect evidence that Lincoln was an infidel, and what he obtained, and what essentially he was called to certify and did certify in effect, was that Lincoln's views were in essential accord with those of Theodore Parker and William Ellery Channing. Theodore Parker was not an orthodox Christian according to the standards of Dr. Smith's church, or of the church of which the present writer is pastor, but he was a Christian, and a very brave and noble Christian. William Ellery Channing's views were not in full accord with the orthodoxy of his day, but he was a noble friend of God and man, and a true Christian.

I have already referred to the very loose and inexact way in which Herndon and others use the term "infidel" as applied to Lincoln. Such inexactness is subversive of all clear thinking.

We are told, for instance, that he was an infidel, his views being essentially those of Theodore Parker and William Ellery Channing. I doubt if he ever read very deeply in the writings of these men; but that he read portions of them and approved of some of their noblest and most characteristic utterances, is certain. What were the discourses of these two men which he must almost certainly have read if he read anything of theirs? He would almost certainly have read Parker's discourse on "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity," and that on "Immortal Life," and Channing's Baltimore address and his discourse on the Church. And these are just the sort of utterances which he would have read with approval as he found them in these discourses of Theodore Parker:

> "Compare the simpleness of Christianity, as Christ sets it forth on the Mount, with what is sometimes

taught and accepted in that honored name, and what a difference! One is of God, one is of man. There is something in Christianity which sects have not reached,—something that will not be won, we fear, by theological battles, or the quarrels of pious men; still we may rejoice that Christ is preached in any way. The Christianity of sects, of the pulpit, of society, is ephemeral,—a transitory fly. It will pass off and be forgot. Some new form will take its place, suited to the aspect of the changing times. Each will represent something of truth, but no one the whole. It seems the whole race of man is needed to do justice to the whole of truth, as 'the whole church to preach the whole gospel.' Truth is intrusted for the time to a perishable ark of human contrivance. Though often shipwrecked, she always comes safe to land, and is not changed by her mishap. That pure ideal religion which Jesus saw on the mount of his vision, and lived out in the lowly life of a Galilean peasant; which transforms his cross into an emblem of all that is holiest on earth; which makes sacred the ground he trod, and is dearest to the best of men, most true to what is truest in them, —cannot pass away. Let men improve never so far in civilization, or soar never so high on the wings of

religion and love, they can never outgo the flight of truth and Christianity. It will always be above them. It is as if we were to fly towards a star, which becomes larger and more bright the nearer we approach, till we enter and are absorbed in its glory."—THEODORE PARKER: *The Transient and Permanent in Christianity*, p. 31.

"I would not slight this wondrous world. I love its day and night: its flowers and its fruits are dear to me. I would not willfully lose sight of a departing cloud. Every year opens new beauty in a star, or in a purple gentian fringed with loveliness. The laws, too, of matter seem more wonderful, the more I study them, in the whirling eddies of the dust, in the curious shells of former life buried by thousands in a grain of chalk, or in the shining diagrams of light above my head. Even the ugly becomes beautiful when truly seen. I see the jewel in the bunchy toad. The more I live, the more I love this lovely world,—feel more its Author in each little thing, in all that is great. But yet I feel my immortality the more. In childhood the consciousness of immortal life buds forth feeble, though full of promise. In the man it unfolds its fragrant petals, his most celestial flower, to

> mature its seed throughout eternity. The prospect of that everlasting life, the perfect justice yet to come, the infinite progress before us, cheer and comfort the heart. Sad and disappointed, full of self-reproach, we shall not be so forever. The light of heaven breaks upon the night of trial, sorrow, sin: the somber clouds which overhung the east, grown purple now, tell us the dawn of heaven is coming in. Our faces, gleamed on by that, smile in the new-born glow. We are beguiled of our sadness before we are aware. The certainty of this provokes us to patience, it forbids us to be slothfully sorrowful. It calls us to be up and doing. The thought that all will at last be right with the slave, the poor, the weak, and the wicked, inspires us with zeal to work for them here, and make it all right for them even now."—THEODORE PARKER: *Immortality*, pp. 23-24.

It is affirmed that Lincoln was an infidel, believing essentially the same as Theodore Parker: and he himself expressed such admiration for and accord with the utterances of Parker which he knew that the statement is partly true. These two quotations, from two of the most easily accessible of Parker's discourses, represent the kind of teaching which Lincoln assimilated from Theodore Parker and show us what kind of infidelity Lincoln learned from him.

When Lincoln turned to the most widely circulated of

Channing's discourses, he read such utterances as these:

> "We regard the Scriptures as the records of God's successive revelations to mankind, and particularly of the last and most perfect revelation of His will by Jesus Christ. Whatever doctrines seem to us to be clearly taught in the Scriptures, we receive without reserve or exception. We do not, however, attach equal importance to all the books in this collection.
>
> "Our leading principle in interpreting Scripture is this, that the Bible is a book written for men, in the language of men, and that its meaning is to be sought in the same manner as that of other books. We believe that God, when He speaks to the human race, conforms, if we may so say, to the established rules of speaking and writing. How else would the Scriptures avail us more than if communicated in an unknown tongue?
>
> "If God be infinitely wise, He cannot sport with the understandings of His creatures. A wise teacher discovers his wisdom in adapting himself to the capacities of his pupils, not in perplexing them with what is unintelligible, not in distressing them with apparent contradictions, not in filling them with a skeptical

distrust of their own powers. An infinitely wise teacher, who knows the precise extent of our minds, and the best method of enlightening them, will surpass all other instructors in bringing down truth to our apprehension, and in showing its loveliness and harmony. We ought, indeed, to expect occasional obscurity in such a book as the Bible, which was written for past and future ages, as well as for the present. But God's wisdom is a pledge, that whatever is necessary for *us*, and necessary for salvation, is revealed too plainly to be mistaken, and too consistently to be questioned, by a sound and upright mind. It is not the mark of wisdom to use an unintelligible phraseology, to communicate what is above our capacities, to confuse and unsettle the intellect by appearances of contradiction. We honor our heavenly teacher too much to ascribe to Him such a revelation. A revelation is a gift of light. It cannot thicken our darkness, and multiply our perplexities.

"We believe, too, that God is just; but we never forget that His justice is the justice of a good being, dwelling in the same mind, and acting in harmony with perfect benevolence. By this attribute, we understand God's infinite regard to

virtue or moral worth, expressed in a moral government; that is, in giving excellent and equitable laws, and in conferring such rewards and inflicting such punishments, as are best fitted to secure their observance. God's justice has for its end the highest virtue of the creation, and it punishes for this end alone, and thus it coincides with benevolence; for virtue and happiness, though not the same, are inseparably conjoined.

"God's justice, thus viewed, appears to us to be in perfect harmony with His mercy. According to the prevalent systems of theology, these attributes are so discordant and jarring, that to reconcile them is the hardest task, and the most wonderful achievement, of infinite wisdom. To us they seem to be intimate friends, always at peace, breathing the same spirit, and seeking the same end. By God's mercy, we understand not a blind, instinctive compassion, which forgives without reflection, and without regard to the interests of virtue. This, we acknowledge, would be incompatible with justice, and also with enlightened benevolence. God's mercy, as we understand it, desires strongly the happiness of the guilty, but only through their penitence."—W. E. CHANNING: Baltimore Discourse of 1819, *Passim*.

"Inward sanctity, pure love, disinterested attachment to God and man, obedience of heart and life, sincere excellence of character, this is the one thing needful, this the essential thing in religion; and all things else, ministers, churches, ordinances, places of worship, all are but means, helps, secondary influences, and utterly worthless when separated from this. To imagine that God regards any thing but this, that He looks at any thing but the heart, is to dishonor Him, to express a mournful insensibility to His pure character. Goodness, purity, virtue, this is the only distinction in God's sight. This is intrinsically, essentially, everlastingly, and by its own nature, lovely, beautiful, glorious, divine. It owes nothing to time, to circumstance to outward connections. It shines by its own light. It is the sun of the spiritual universe. It is God himself dwelling in the human soul. Can any man think lightly of it, because it has not grown up in a certain church, or exalt any church above it? My friends, one of the grandest truths of religion is the supreme importance of character, of virtue, of that divine spirit which shone out in Christ. The grand heresy is, to substitute any thing for this, whether creed, or form, or church."—W. E. CHANNING:

Discourse on the Church, pp. 23-24.

If Lincoln was made an infidel or confirmed in his infidelity by his reading of William Ellery Channing, the foregoing is a reasonable sample of the quality of his infidelity: for these are not only characteristic utterances of Channing: they are among the utterances which Lincoln was most certain to have had thrust into his hand, and most likely to have read and to have approved.

The author of this work is not a Unitarian, and he is ready, on any proper occasion, to define to anyone who has a right to know, his own opinions in contradistinction from those of the Unitarian churches. But his loyalty to his own convictions lays upon him no obligation to be unfair to men who hold opinions other than his own. It is to be noted that it is Mr. Herndon, and not some bigoted exponent of orthodoxy, who calls Theodore Parker an infidel. The present writer holds no such opinion of Parker, nor yet of Channing. On the contrary, he is of opinion that their writings were beneficial to Abraham Lincoln, as helping him to define some of his own views constructively and reverently. While Beecher or Bushnell might have done it as well or better, it was not their books which Jesse Fell gave to Lincoln; and Lincoln used what he had. To say that Lincoln's views were like those of Parker or Channing is to affirm that Lincoln was not an infidel, but a Christian.

Was Lincoln, then, a Unitarian?

No. Of Unitarianism he knew nothing, so far as we are informed. He knew the views of certain Unitarians, and these assisted him at important points in defining certain aspects of his faith.

There have been rumors that Mr. Lincoln did come into actual contact with organized Unitarianism. I have been interested in inquiring whether this was true. During the Billy Sunday meetings in Paterson, New Jersey, in 1916, the Unitarians opened a booth there for the distribution of their literature, and there were certain communications in the local press resulting from the counter-irritation of those meetings. Among these was one in the Paterson *Guardian*, signed "Once-in-Awhile." It said:

> "The following is, in part, a sketch of my own youthful experience, together with a statement of facts that relate to others who long since have passed on.
>
> "In 1851-52 the Chicago & Alton Railroad was being built, and I was employed on a section of the work at that time. Our section extended from Springfield, Illinois, to a little town called Chatham, situated near the Sangamon River, a distance of about ten miles south from Springfield. The majority of the people who had located in that part of the country at that time were from the central part of New York State, and among them was Elder Shipman, a Unitarian. He was a very able preacher and 'made good' with all who knew him in the Sangamon country. It was not long before he received a call to preach in Springfield. The little Unitarian church there was located just around the corner from Capitol Square.

When Elder Shipman was permanently located there, Abraham Lincoln became a regular and seemingly much interested attendant. Nearly all of the boys in our 'gang' had known Elder Shipman way back in New York State, and, there being no ball games or other amusements save an occasional horse race, almost every Sunday all hands would saddle horses and gallop to Springfield to attend the services conducted there by our old-time pastor. At the close of the regular service Mr. Lincoln was often called upon for a few remarks, and many of his sayings are still fresh in my mind today, although that was sixty-three years ago. Since then, in the quiet hours that have passed, I often find myself looking back through the mist of vanished years and fancy I feel the grip of his great, bony hand in mine, or rather mine in his, and hear his kindly voice saying, 'Boys, good-by, come again. Come often!'

"I am not saying that Mr. Lincoln subscribed to the Unitarian articles of faith, but I have good and sufficient reason to believe that he did, and, if I am not mistaken, the proof is wanting that he ever subscribed to faith in articles of any other religious denomination."

I challenged the veracity of this letter, reprinting it in *The Advance*, of which I was editor, and asking these questions:

> 1. Who is Mr. Once-in-Awhile, and why does he not sign his real name?
>
> 2. How does it happen that no one else of those who attended the alleged Unitarian church in Springfield in the days when Lincoln is supposed to have been there has risen up to tell this story some time during the last half century; and why does it come to us from Paterson and not from Springfield?
>
> 3. Who is this Elder Shipman concerning whom this letter tells us? We are informed that the Unitarian Year Book shows no such man.
>
> 4. Where was this Unitarian church "just around the corner from Capitol Square"? Around which corner, and what became of it?
>
> We are informed that there was no Unitarian church in Springfield sixty-three years ago. We were not there and do not know: but if one was there, where was it? When was it organized? Who were its ministers?
>
> 5. With so popular a preacher as Mr. Shipman appears to have been, is it altogether likely that he would have made the habit of calling upon a

layman who attended his church to speak at the close of the service?

6. If Mr. Lincoln was in the habit of attending this Unitarian church, how did the Presbyterian church of Springfield get the impression that Mr. Lincoln attended there with his wife, and why did he continue to attend the Presbyterian church after he went to Washington?

7. Lincoln is known to have said that if he knew any church whose only creed was the command of Jesus to love God with all one's heart and his neighbor as himself, he would join that church, and Unitarians have frequently declared that if Mr. Lincoln had ever come into contact with the Unitarian Church he must on the basis of that declaration have united with it. We are not clear if their inference is correct, but we are clear that there has been a very general impression among Unitarians that he was not familiar with that church and creed.

We do not call in question the veracity of Mr. Once-in-Awhile, whoever he may be. We merely do what we have done before, we ask for one or two facts. If anybody knows that Abraham Lincoln habitually attended a Unitarian church and frequently participated in its public service by speaking at

> the close of the sermon, let him now
> speak or else forever hold his peace.

Everybody held his peace, including Mr. Once-in-Awhile!

—

Such stories are rarely made out of whole cloth. I therefore inquired of the *Christian Register* (Unitarian) and the *Christian Leader* (Universalist) to learn if they knew any basis of truth in the above statement, and they did not know and were not able to learn anything accurate about it. However, there came to me in the course of the inquiry, which was of necessity not very thorough for lack of anything definite to begin with, an impression, based on information too vague to be cited, that there was a Mr. Shipman, a Universalist rather than a Unitarian, whose occasional services in Springfield Mr. Lincoln attended once or more and enjoyed. But this came to me very vaguely, and may be far from the truth.

Whether there be a ten per cent. modicum of fact at the root of the above letter I will not attempt to guess, for my own information is too meager. The picture, as a whole, of Mr. Lincoln preaching Unitarianism from a Unitarian pulpit, and at the close assuming charge of the service of farewell and exhorting the railroad hands to come again is too far from the possible truth to require very close analysis.

The Unitarian books which Mr. Lincoln read cursorily, the books by Parker and Channing, must have assisted him in this, that they gave assurance that there were forward-looking men who believed in God and in human freedom as he did, and who were quite as far from holding the teaching which he

had been taught to call orthodox as he was, yet who were not infidels, but counted themselves friends of God and disciples of Jesus Christ.

Herndon asserts that Lincoln habitually spoke in his presence in terms of denial of the supernatural birth of Jesus. On this point I have seen but one bit of documentary evidence, and that of unique interest, in two words written in a book that once belonged to Lincoln. The book is entitled *Exercises in the Syntax of the Greek Language*, by Rev. William Nielson, D.D., and contains two appendixes by Prof. Charles Anthon, noted as a Greek scholar and the author of a Greek Grammar and other textbooks. It was published by T. & J. Swords in New York, in 1825. At the bottom of page 34 is a sentence, shortened and modified from John 16:27, and printed in parallel Greek and English,—

"Ye have loved me, and

have believed that I came forth

from God."

The words "from God" are erased with pen, and the words, "from nature" substituted, apparently in the handwriting of Mr. Lincoln. This, if its genuineness be established, would appear to be conclusive that at the time Lincoln owned this book he denied the supernatural birth of Jesus.

The book was formerly a part of the noted collection of Mr. John E. Burton, procured by him from the collection of Dr. J. B. English, and was retained by Mr. Burton with other unique items when his large collection was broken up some years ago. I was privileged to examine the book by A. C. McClurg &

Co., in April, 1919; the book being then and possibly still owned by them.

That the book was once owned by Lincoln would appear certain. His signature on the flyleaf is in his firm, mature hand, written as he was accustomed to write it until some time after he became President, "A. Lincoln." The ownership would appear to be still further attested by an inscription on the inside of the front cover, "Compliments to Master Abe Lincoln, and good success, truly yours, Charles Anthon, Columbia College." But this inscription raises more questions than it answers. I am not familiar with the handwriting of Professor Anthon, but I am disposed to question the genuineness of this inscription. That it has been received as genuine by previous owners of the book is attested by the fact that another hand has written before "Columbia College" the words "A Prof." evidently that Professor Anthon might be properly introduced to persons who did not know him. Professor Anthon was a noted classical scholar, but I cannot help wondering at what period of his career he could have come into personal touch with Abraham Lincoln. Not, certainly, in 1825, when the book was published, and when Lincoln was sixteen years old. And at what later period would Professor Anthon have addressed him as "Master Abe Lincoln"?

If Anthon came to know Lincoln personally so as to care to present him with one of his books, it would seem as if he would have given him a book of which he was the sole or chief author, and not one in which his part was confined to the appendix. Anthon's interest in the Greek was primarily classical, and that of the author of this work was primarily Biblical. If Anthon came to know Lincoln it would probably have been after Lincoln had become a national

figure, say in 1848 or some later year, by which time a book issued in 1825 would have become an old story to an author engaged in publishing new books.

Let me, then, in the absence of direct evidence, venture the hypothesis that the book was really owned by Lincoln; that it came into his possession not earlier than the time when, having mastered Kirkham's Grammar, he welcomed the ownership of a book which suggested the possible knowledge of a classical tongue. That he bought the book is hardly probable; that it was the gift of Professor Anthon is improbable, because there would appear to have been no contact between the two at a period when such a gift would have been appropriate: let us assume, then, that someone else gave him the book, and that the attribution to Professor Anthon is the conjectural record of a later owner.[47]

The book might conceivably have come into Lincoln's possession through the Green boys, or the brother of Ann Rutledge, returning from Illinois College to New Salem; for it was a book which might easily have been floating around Jacksonville, and picked up by a student there, and later discarded because he had no special interest in the Greek of the New Testament. Lincoln would have been more likely to feel a passing interest in it then than at any other period of his career, for he was widening his educational horizon, and had not as yet set any limits to his learning in one or another direction. He might have picked it up, or it might have been handed him by some minister, during his early years in Springfield; but by that time Lincoln must have given up any passing notion that he might ever learn Greek. He could hardly have procured it and would not have cared for it before he lived in New Salem:

he must have ceased to think of the possibility of learning Greek before he had lived long in Springfield.

I assume, also, that the erasure of the words "from God" and the substitution of the words "from nature" is in Lincoln's hand; though the two words are written at the very bottom of the page, with no support for the hand, and are not as well written as the signature, and their authenticity might be questioned. I am disposed to think that he wrote it, and this, evidently, was the opinion of Mr. Burton, as indicated by a note in the book in his handwriting.

It might be mentioned in passing that the word "God" is not in this verse in the New Testament, either Greek or English. It reads, "Ye have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father." Perhaps if Dr. Nielson had followed the text literally, Lincoln would not have troubled to amend it.

I accept it as a genuine document, and one of real interest; but the lack of a date makes it almost valueless as proof of Lincoln's settled belief. I place it, conjecturally, in the New Salem period of his life, though it may date from the beginning of his life in Springfield.

I have not read the entire book, nor compared the Greek throughout with the English, but I note that in this passage the English is not translated from the Greek, but the Greek is translated backward from the English, and that inexactly. I judge this to be not the effect of bad scholarship but the result of a desire to convey a lesson. For instance, the Greek of this passage is made into a personal confession by the change of person in the first part of the verse, without corresponding change in the second part, leaving the first verb without a direct object, so that

a literal translation reads,—

"I love and believe that I came forth from God."

Dr. Nielson probably knew why he did it so, but Professor Anthon would have been likely to say that that was not very good Greek syntax. It served its purpose, however, as showing, what this section was intended to show, the various uses of the Greek conjunctions.

Lincoln, it may be presumed, got little if anything out of the Greek. I find no mark of his except on this and the facing page. There he found two admonitions which he boxed in, and made a note of them on the false-title:

4. Deliberate slowly, but execute

promptly, the things which

have appeared unto thee proper

to be done.

5. Love, not the immoderate

acquisition, but the moderate enjoyment,

of present good.

In the front of the book he wrote a reference to this, and added,

Deliberate slowly but
execute promptly.
Think well and do your duty.

These precepts seemed to impress him; and they

were certainly characteristic of him. But we can draw no very wide deduction from his use of the Greek or the substitution of the word in the translation.

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CHAPTER XVI

CHITTENDEN AND CHINIQUY

TWO notable interviews touching the religious opinions of Mr. Lincoln deserve record here. One is by Rev. Charles Chiniquy, some time priest in the Roman Catholic Church, and afterward a strong Protestant. He had been a client of Mr. Lincoln's in Illinois, and Mr. Lincoln trusted and believed in him. He visited Mr. Lincoln in the White House, and there, as before Mr. Lincoln's departure for Springfield, he warned him that there were plots against the life of the President.

The other is by Hon. L. E. Chittenden, who was chosen by Mr. Lincoln as Register of the Treasury, and who was an honest and incorruptible man.

Father Chiniquy visited Mr. Lincoln in the White House in August, 1861, June, 1862, and June, 1864, for the purpose of warning Mr. Lincoln of plots, which Father Chiniquy believed to be inspired by Jesuits, against the life of Mr. Lincoln. On the last of these occasions, June 9, 1864, in the course of an extended interview, he reported Mr. Lincoln as saying:

> "'You are not the first to warn me against the dangers of assassination. My ambassadors in Italy, France, and England, as well as Professor Morse, have, many times, warned me against the plots of murderers

whom they have detected in those different countries. But I see no other safeguard against these murderers, but to be always ready to die, as Christ advises it. As we must all die sooner or later, it makes very little difference to me whether I die from a dagger plunged through the heart or from an inflammation of the lungs. Let me tell you that I have, lately, read a message in the Old Testament which has made a profound, and, I hope, a salutary impression on me. Here is that passage.'

"The President took his Bible, opened it at the third chapter of Deuteronomy, and read from the 22d to the 27th verse:

"'"22. Ye shall not fear them: for the Lord your God he shall fight for you.

"'"23. And I besought the Lord at that time, saying,

"'"24. O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might?

"'"25. I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.

"'"26. But the Lord was wroth with

me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter.

""27. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes; for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.'"

"After the President had read these words with great solemnity, he added:

"'My dear Father Chiniquy, let me tell you that I have read these strange and beautiful words several times, these last five or six weeks. The more I read them, the more it seems to me that God has written them for me as well as for Moses.

"'Has He not taken me from my poor log cabin, by the hand, as He did Moses, in the reeds of the Nile, to put me at the head of the greatest and most blessed of modern nations just as He put that prophet at the head of the most blessed nation of ancient times? Has not God granted me a privilege, which was not granted to any living man, when I broke the fetters of 4,000,000 of men, and made them free? Has not our God given me the most glorious victories over my enemies? Are not the armies of the Confederacy so

reduced to a handful of men, when compared to what they were two years ago, that the day is fast approaching when they will have to surrender?

"'Now, I see the end of this terrible conflict, with the same joy of Moses, when at the end of his trying forty years in the wilderness; and I pray my God to grant me to see the days of peace and untold prosperity, which will follow this cruel war, as Moses asked God to see the other side of Jordan, and enter the Promised Land. But, do you know, that I hear in my soul, as the voice of God, giving me the rebuke which was given to Moses?

"'Yes! every time that my soul goes to God to ask the favor of seeing the other side of Jordan, and eating the fruits of that peace, after which I am longing with such an unspeakable desire, do you know that there is a still but solemn voice which tells me that I will see those things only from a long distance, and that I will be among the dead when the nation, which God granted me to lead through those awful trials, will cross the Jordan, and dwell in that Land of Promise, where peace, industry, happiness, and liberty will make everyone happy; and why so? Because He has already given me

favors which He never gave, I dare say, to any man in these latter days.

"'Why did God Almighty refuse to Moses the favor of crossing the Jordan, and entering the Promised Land? It was on account of the nation's sins! That law of divine retribution and justice, by which one must suffer for another, is surely a terrible mystery. But it is a fact which no man who has any intelligence and knowledge can deny. Moses, who knew that law, though he probably did not understand it better than we do, calmly says to his people: "God was wroth with me for your sakes."

"'But, though we do not understand that mysterious and terrible law, we find it written in letters of tears and blood wherever we go. We do not read a single page of history without finding undeniable traces of its existence.

"'Where is the mother who has not shed real tears and suffered real tortures, for her children's sake?

"'Who is the good king, the worthy emperor, the gifted chieftain, who has not suffered unspeakable mental agonies, or even death, for his people's sake?

"'Is not our Christian religion the highest expression of the wisdom,

mercy, and love of God! But what is Christianity if not the very incarnation of that eternal law of Divine justice in our humanity?

"'When I look on Moses, alone, silently dying on the Mount Pisgah, I see that law, in one of its most sublime human manifestations, and I am filled with admiration and awe.

"'But when I consider that law of justice, and expiation in the death of the Just, the divine Son of Mary, on the Mount of Calvary, I remain mute in my adoration. The spectacle of the Crucified One which is before my eyes is more than sublime, it is divine! Moses died for his People's sake, but Christ died for the whole world's sake! Both died to fulfill the same eternal law of the Divine justice, though in a different measure.

"'Now, would it not be the greatest of honors and privileges bestowed upon me, if God in His infinite love, mercy, and wisdom would put me between His faithful servant, Moses, and His eternal Son, Jesus, that I might die as they did, for my nation's sake!

"'My God alone knows what I have already suffered for my dear country's sake. But my fear is that the justice of God is not yet paid. When I look upon the rivers of tears

and blood drawn by the lashes of the merciless masters from the veins of the very heart of those millions of defenseless slaves, these two hundred years; when I remember the agonies, the cries, the unspeakable tortures of those unfortunate people to which I have, to some extent, connived with so many others a part of my life, I fear that we are still far from the complete expiation. For the judgments of God are true and righteous.

"'It seems to me that the Lord wants today, as He wanted in the days of Moses, another victim—a victim which He has himself chosen, anointed and prepared for the sacrifice, by raising it above the rest of His people. I cannot conceal from you that my impression is that I am the victim. So many plots have already been made against my life, that it is a real miracle that they have all failed. But can we expect that God will make a perpetual miracle to save my life? I believe not.

"'But just as the Lord heard no murmur from the lips of Moses, when He told him that he had to die before crossing the Jordan, for the sins of his people, so I hope and pray that He will hear no murmur from me when I fall for my nation's sake.

'"The only two favors I ask of the Lord are, first, that I may die for the sacred cause in which I am engaged, and when I am the standard bearer of the rights and privileges of my country.

'"The second favor I ask from God is that my dear son, Robert, when I am gone, will be one of those who lift up that flag of Liberty which will cover my tomb, and carry it with honor and fidelity to the end of his life, as his father did, surrounded by the millions who will be called with him to fight and die for the defense and honor of our country.'

'"Never had I heard such sublime words,' says Father Chiniquy. 'Never had I seen a human face so solemn and so prophet-like as the face of the President when uttering these things. Every sentence had come to me as a hymn from heaven, reverberated by the echoes of the mountains of Pisgah and Calvary. I was beside myself. Bathed in tears, I tried to say something, but I could not utter a word. I knew the hour to leave had come. I asked from the President permission to fall on my knees and pray with him that his life might be spared; and he knelt with me. But I prayed more with my tears and sobs than with my words. Then I pressed his hand on my lips and

> bathed it with tears, and with a heart filled with an unspeakable desolation, I bade him adieu.'"—*Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*, pp. 706-10.

Hon. L. E. Chittenden, Register of the Treasury under Lincoln, gives this testimony to Lincoln's religious character:

> "In the Presidential campaign of 1864 there were sullen whisperings that Mr. Lincoln had no religious opinions nor any interest in churches or Christian institutions. They faded away with other libels, never to be renewed until after his death. One of his biographers, who calls himself the 'friend and partner for twenty years' of the deceased President, has since published what he calls a history of his life, in which he revives the worst of these rumors, with additions which, if true, would destroy much of the world's respect for Mr. Lincoln. He asserts that his 'friend and partner' was 'an infidel verging towards atheism.' Others have disseminated these charges in lectures and fugitive sketches so industriously that they have produced upon strangers some impression of their truth. The excuse alleged is, their desire to present Mr. Lincoln to the world 'just as he was.' Their real purpose is to present him just as they would have him to be, as

much as possible like themselves.

"It is a trait of the infidel to parade his unbelief before the public, and he thinks something gained to himself when he can show that others are equally deficient in moral qualities. But these writers have attempted too much. Their principal charge of infidelity, tinged with atheism, is so completely at variance with all our knowledge of his opinions that its origin must be attributed to malice or to a defective mental constitution.

"His sincerity and candor were conspicuous qualities of Mr. Lincoln's mind. Deception was a vice in which he had neither experience nor skill. All who were admitted to his intimacy will agree that he was incapable of professing opinions which he did not entertain. When we find him at the moment of leaving his home for Washington, surrounded by his neighbors of a quarter of a century, taking Washington for his exemplar, whose success he ascribed 'to the aid of that Divine Providence upon which he at all times relied,' and publicly declaring that he, himself, 'placed his whole trust in the same Almighty Being, and the prayers of Christian men and women'; when, not once or twice, but on all proper, and more

than a score of subsequent occasions, he avowed his faith in an Omnipotent Ruler, who will judge the world in righteousness—in the Bible as the inspired record of His history and His law; when with equal constancy he thanked Almighty God for, and declared his interest in, Christian institutions and influences as the appointed means for his effective service, we may assert that we know that he was neither an atheist nor an infidel, but, on the contrary, a sincere believer in the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. In fact, he believed so confidently that the Almighty was making use of the war, of himself, and other instrumentalities in working out some great design for the benefit of humanity, and his belief that he himself was directed by the same Omniscient Power was expressed with such frankness and frequency, that it attracted attention, and was criticized by some as verging towards superstition. His public life was a continuous service of God and his fellow-man, controlled and guided by the golden rule, in which there was no hiatus of unbelief or incredulity.

"Here I might well stop, and submit that these charges do not deserve any further consideration. But I know how false they are, and I may

be excused if I record one of my sources of knowledge.

"The emphatic statement made by the President to Mr. Fessenden, that he was called to the Presidency by a Power higher than human authority, I have already mentioned. His calm serenity at times when others were so anxious, his confidence that his own judgment was directed by the Almighty, so impressed me that, when I next had the opportunity, at some risk of giving offense, I ventured to ask him directly how far he believed the Almighty actually directed our national affairs. There was a considerable pause before he spoke, and when he did speak, what he said was more in the nature of a monologue than an answer to my inquiry:

'"That the Almighty does make use of human agencies, and directly intervenes in human affairs, is,' he said, 'one of the plainest evidences of His direction, so many instances when I have been controlled by some other power than my own will, that I cannot doubt that this power comes from above. I frequently see my way clear to a decision when I am conscious that I have no sufficient facts upon which to found it. But I cannot recall one instance in which I have followed my own

judgment, founded upon such a decision, where the results were unsatisfactory; whereas, in almost every instance where I have yielded to the views of others, I have had occasion to regret it. I am satisfied that when the Almighty wants me to do or not to do a particular thing, He finds a way of letting me know it. I am confident that it is His design to restore the Union. He will do it in His own good time. We should obey and not oppose His will.'

"'You speak with such confidence,' I said, 'that I would like to know how your knowledge that God acts directly upon human affairs compares in certainty with your knowledge of a fact apparent to the senses—for example, the fact that we are at this moment here in this room.'

"'One is as certain as the other,' he answered, 'although the conclusions are reached by different processes. I know by my senses that the movements of the world are those of an infinitely powerful machine, which runs for ages without a variation. A man who can put two ideas together knows that such a machine requires an infinitely powerful maker and governor: man's nature is such that he cannot take in the machine and keep out the

maker. This maker is God—infinite in wisdom as well as in power. Would we be any more certain if we saw Him?'

"'I am not controverting your position,' I said. 'Your confidence interests me beyond expression. I wish I knew how to acquire it. Even now, must it not all depend on our faith in the Bible?'

"'No. There is the element of personal experience,' he said. 'If it did, the character of the Bible is easily established, at least to my satisfaction. We have to believe many things which we do not comprehend. The Bible is the only one that claims to be God's Book—to comprise His law—His history. It contains an immense amount of evidence of its own authenticity. It describes a governor omnipotent enough to operate this great machine, and declares that He made it. It states other facts which we do not fully comprehend, but which we cannot account for. What shall we do with them?

"'Now let us treat the Bible fairly. If we had a witness on the stand whose general story we knew was true, we would believe him when he asserted facts of which we had no other evidence. We ought to treat the Bible with equal fairness. I decided a

long time ago that it was less difficult to believe that the Bible was what it claimed to be than to disbelieve it. It is a good book for us to obey—it contains the ten commandments, the golden rule, and many other rules which ought to be followed. No man was ever the worse for living according to the directions of the Bible.'

"'If your views are correct, the Almighty is on our side, and we ought to win without so many losses ——'

"He promptly interrupted me and said, 'We have no right to criticize or complain. He is on our side, and so is the Bible, and so are churches and Christian societies and organizations —all of them, so far as I know, almost without an exception. It makes me strong and more confident to know that all the Christians in the loyal States are praying for our success, that all their influences are working to the same end. Thousands of them are fighting for us, and no one will say that an officer or a private is less brave because he is a praying soldier. At first, when we had such long spells of bad luck, I used to lose heart sometimes. Now I seem to know that Providence has protected and will protect us against any fatal defeat. All we have to do is

to trust the Almighty and keep right on obeying His orders and executing His will.'

"I could not press inquiry further. I knew that Mr. Lincoln was no hypocrite. There was an air of such sincerity in his manner of speaking, and especially in his references to the Almighty, that no one could have doubted his faith unless the doubter believed him dishonest. It scarcely needed his repeated statements that 'whatever shall appear to be God's will, that will I do,' his special gratitude to God for victories, or his numerous expressions of his firm faith that God willed our final triumph, to convince the American people that he was not and could not be an atheist or an infidel.

"He has written of the Bible, that 'this great Book of God is the best gift which God has ever given to man,' and that 'all things desirable for man to know are contained in it.' His singular familiarity with its contents is even stronger evidence of the high place it held in his judgment. His second inaugural address shows how sensibly he appreciated the force and beauty of its passages, and constitutes an admirable application of its truths, only possible as the result of familiar

use and thorough study.

> "Further comment cannot be necessary. Abraham Lincoln accepted the Bible as the inspired word of God—he believed and faithfully endeavored to live according to the fundamental principles and doctrines of the Christian faith. To doubt either proposition is to be untrue to his memory, a disloyalty of which no American should be guilty."—CHITTENDEN: *Recollections of President Lincoln and His Administration*, pp. 446-51.

These two incidents call for no extended comment. That in each of them the literary style is more like that of the narrator than it is like the style of Mr. Lincoln is evident, and there is other apparent evidence that the incidents were colored by the imagination of the two men who related them. But neither of them was a lie. And, when we make due deductions, each contains a basis of fact in accord with what we might have expected Lincoln to say.

For instance, the assurance which he expressed to Chittenden that God had called him to his work as President, and that he was fulfilling divine destiny, is fully in accord with the strong conviction of predestination which he had received in his youth, and which was so marked that his partners took it as a mark of selfish superiority. He did feel, and felt so strongly that he sometimes seemed to be oblivious to other and correlative truths, that God had called him to a great task, and that he would live till it was accomplished, plots or no plots. But he had a gloomy

foreboding that he would not live much longer. His conviction of predestination had in it a compelling sense of destiny and almost of doom, a conviction of Divinity shaping his ends, even though he rough-hewed them.

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CHAPTER XVII

THE BEECHER AND SICKLES INCIDENTS

AMONG the many stories of President Lincoln's religious life, one of the most impressive concerns an alleged visit of the President to the home of Henry Ward Beecher and the spending of a night in prayer by these two men. The story is as follows:

> "Following the disaster of Bull Run, when the strength and resources of the nation seemed to have been wasted, the hopes of the North were at their lowest ebb, and Mr. Lincoln was well-nigh overwhelmed with the awful responsibility of guiding the nation in its life struggle. Henry Ward Beecher, of Brooklyn, was, perhaps, more prominently associated with the cause of the North at that time than any other minister of the gospel. He had preached and lectured and fought its battles in pulpit and press all over the country, had ransomed slaves from his pulpit, and his convictions and feelings were everywhere known.
>
> "Late one evening a stranger called at his home and asked to see him. Mr. Beecher was working alone in

his study, as was his custom, and this stranger refused to send up his name, and came muffled in a military cloak which completely hid his face. Mrs. Beecher's suspicions were aroused, and she was very unwilling that he should have the interview which he requested, especially as Mr. Beecher's life had been frequently threatened by sympathizers with the South. The latter, however, insisted that his visitor be shown up. Accordingly, the stranger entered, the doors were shut, and for hours the wife below could hear their voices and their footsteps as they paced back and forth. Finally, toward midnight, the mysterious visitor went out, still muffled in his cloak, so that it was impossible to gain any idea of his features.

"The years went by, the war was finished, the President had suffered martyrdom at his post, and it was not until shortly before Mr. Beecher's death, over twenty years later, that he made known that the mysterious stranger who had called on that stormy night was Abraham Lincoln. The stress and strain of those days and nights of struggle, with all the responsibilities and sorrows of a nation fighting for its life resting upon him, had broken his strength, and for a time undermined his

> courage. He had traveled alone in disguise and at night from Washington to Brooklyn, to gain the sympathy and help of one whom he knew as a man of God, engaged in the same great battle in which he was the leader. Alone for hours that night, like Jacob of old, the two had wrestled together in prayer with the God of battles and the Watcher over the right until they had received the help which He had promised to those that seek His aid."

Dr. Johnson endeavored to investigate this story for his book, *Lincoln the Christian*.[48] The evidence seemed to him sufficient to justify him in including it in his volume. It rests on the explicit statement of Mrs. Henry Ward Beecher and was communicated to the public through some of her grandchildren. This, surely, is evidence that cannot be wholly disregarded. Mr. Samuel Scoville, Jr., a lawyer in Philadelphia, a grandson of Henry Ward Beecher, confirmed the accuracy of the story as here given, saying that this was the form in which his grandmother had related the story to her grandchildren.

Another grandson, Rev. David G. Downey, D.D., Book Editor of the Methodist Book Concern of New York said:

> "It has always seemed to me to be a perfectly possible situation. It has never, however, been corroborated by any of the members of the family. It rests entirely upon the statement

> of Mrs. Beecher in her old age."—
> *Lincoln the Christian*, p. 201.

Mrs. Henry Ward Beecher was a truthful woman. She did not manufacture an incident of this character, but the incident is highly improbable. It would be ungracious to point out in detail the elements of weakness in the story.

Let one consideration alone be stated. The publishers of the *North American Review* gathered from the leading men of America a series of chapters in which each man related his own personal reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln. That volume is still easily obtained and is a valuable mine of information. Among the other men who contributed to it was Henry Ward Beecher. He wrote a chapter in which he told in detail of his personal association with Mr. Lincoln. This incident finds no mention there nor anything remotely resembling it.

If Mr. Lincoln had felt disposed to visit Mr. Beecher for a purpose of this character, he knew very well that the easier and safer and far less embarrassing way was to invite Mr. Beecher to the White House to see him. Beecher was no stranger in Washington at this time and Lincoln had the telegraph wires under his control and did not hesitate to use them when there was need. Beecher made at least one journey to Washington to confer with Lincoln on a matter of editorial policy. His well-known sympathy with the President was such that no explanation need have been made of his taking a train from New York on any day and spending an evening in Washington. A message in the morning would have brought Beecher there by night and no one either in Washington or New York would have thought of it as strange. On the other hand, the absence of the President from

Washington at a time as critical as that immediately following the Battle of Bull Run and with no one able to account for his absence from the Capitol or with any knowledge of the errand that had taken him away is well-nigh preposterous. Such an absence might have given rise to the wildest rumors of the President's abduction or murder. Lincoln was too prudent a man, too shrewd and cautious a man, too deeply concerned for the possible effect of so rash and needless a journey; too deeply chagrined over the criticisms of his alleged entering into Washington in disguise at the time of his inauguration, to have done the thing which Mrs. Beecher, when a very old woman, imagined him to have done.

Mr. Beecher was editor of *The Christian Union* and had occasion to write about Abraham Lincoln, and he wrote nothing of this kind. In his sermons and in his lectures he had frequent occasion to mention Lincoln, and no story of this sort is related as having come from him. Mr. Beecher knew too well the homiletic and editorial value of such an incident not to have related it if it had occurred.

Someone came to see him one stormy night and the two lingered long together in prayer. For some doubtless good reason Mr. Beecher did not tell his family the name of the man with whom he had spent those earnest hours. Many years afterward, Lincoln and Beecher both being dead, Mrs. Beecher recalled the event and satisfied herself that it was Mr. Lincoln who had come from Washington to see her husband and spend some hours in prayer with him.

This is the reasonable explanation, as it seems to me, of an incident which has had rather wide currency but which we are not justified in accepting on the unsupported testimony of even so good a woman as

Mrs. Beecher in her old age.

An incident of remarkable interest, attested as authentic by two generals of the Civil War, is related by General James F. Rusling, in his *Men and Things in Civil War Days*:

> General D. E. Sickles was wounded at Gettysburg, and brought to Washington, where a leg was amputated. President Lincoln called upon him, and in reply to a question from General Sickles whether or not the President was anxious about the battle at Gettysburg, Lincoln gravely said, 'No, I was not; some of my Cabinet and many others in Washington were, but I had no fears.' General Sickles inquired how this was, and seemed curious about it. Mr. Lincoln hesitated, but finally replied: 'Well, I will tell you how it was. In the pinch of your campaign up there, when everybody seemed panic-stricken, and nobody could tell what was going to happen, oppressed by the gravity of our affairs, I went to my room one day, and I locked the door, and got down on my knees before Almighty God, and prayed to Him mightily for victory at Gettysburg. I told Him that this was His war, and our cause His cause, but we couldn't stand another Fredericksburg or Chancellorsville. And I then and there made a solemn vow to

Almighty God, that if He would stand by our boys at Gettysburg, I would stand by Him. And He *did* stand by you boys, and I *will* stand by Him. And after that (I don't know how it was, and I can't explain it), soon a sweet comfort crept into my soul that God Almighty had taken the whole business into his own hands and that things would go all right at Gettysburg. And that is why I had no fears about you.' Asked concerning Vicksburg, the news of which victory had not yet reached him, he said, 'I have been praying for Vicksburg also, and believe our Heavenly Father is going to give us victory there, too.' General Rusling says that Mr. Lincoln spoke 'solemnly and pathetically, as if from the depth of his heart,' and that his manner was deeply touching."[49]

CHAPTER XVIII

"BEHIND THE SCENES"

THE family of the President of the United States ought to be permitted a reasonable degree of privacy, but this has never yet been accorded them. In the case of the family of President Lincoln the rudeness of the public was shameful. It is not our present purpose to intrude into the domestic life of Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln, and if we shall ever do so hereafter it will be, let us hope, with more of consideration than some critics have shown.

After the death of Mr. Lincoln, a number of books and articles appeared which gave close and intimate glimpses of the life of President and Mrs. Lincoln during the four years which they spent in the White House. We shall examine two or three of these only in so far as they relate to Mr. Lincoln's religious life.

For four years Mrs. Lincoln had with her in the White House as dressmaker and attendant Mrs. Elizabeth Keckley, an intelligent colored woman. In 1868 Mrs. Keckley published a book entitled *Behind the Scenes*.[50] It related many intimate details of life in the Lincoln household, with much about Mrs. Lincoln's extravagances of expenditure and infirmities of temper, and some things about Mr. Lincoln. It is a most informing book, though one containing many details which had been as well unprinted. Its general truthfulness is attested by its internal evidence. Of Lincoln's anxiety when battles were in progress, and of the relief which he sought in

agonized prayer, she tells, and with apparent truthfulness. Of one battle she relates:

> "One day he came into the room where I was fitting a dress for Mrs. Lincoln. His step was slow and heavy, and his face sad. Like a tired child he threw himself upon the sofa, and shaded his eyes with his hands. He was a complete picture of dejection. Mrs. Lincoln, observing his troubled look, asked:
>
> "'Where have you been?'
>
> "'To the War Department,' was the brief, almost sullen answer.
>
> "'Any news?'
>
> "'Yes, plenty of news, but no good news. It is dark, dark everywhere.'
>
> "He reached forth one of his long arms and took a small Bible from a stand near the head of the sofa, opened the pages of the Holy Book, and soon was absorbed in reading them. A quarter of an hour passed, and on glancing at the sofa the face of the President seemed more cheerful. The dejected look was gone, and the countenance was lighted up with new resolution and hope. The change was so marked that I could not but wonder at it, and wonder led to the desire to know what book of the Bible afforded so much comfort to the

> reader. Making the search for a missing article an excuse, I walked gently around the sofa, and, looking into the open book, I discovered that Mr. Lincoln was reading that divine comforter, Job. He read with Christian eagerness, and the courage and the hope that he derived from the inspired pages made him a new man."—*Behind the Scenes*, p. 118.

Mrs. Keckley helped prepare the body of Willie for burial. She relates:

> "When Willie died, as he lay on the bed, Mr. Lincoln came to the bed, lifted the cover from the face of his child, gazed at it long and earnestly, murmuring: 'My poor boy, he was too good for this earth. God has called him home. I know that he is much better off in heaven, but then we loved him so. It is hard, hard to have him die!'"—*Behind the Scenes*, p. 103.

> "Mrs. Rebecca R. Pomeroy, a Christian woman from Chelsea, Massachusetts, who had come to nurse the Lincoln children in their sickness, speaks of Lincoln's great affliction and sadness. On the morning of the funeral she assured him that many Christians were praying for him. With eyes suffused with tears, he replied: 'I am glad to

> hear that. I want them to pray for me. I need their prayers.' Mrs. Pomeroy expressed her sympathy with him as they were going out to the burial. Thanking her gently, he said, 'I will try to go to God with my sorrows.' She asked him a few days after if he could not trust God. With deep religious feeling, he replied: 'I think I can, and I will try. I wish I had that childlike faith you speak of, and I trust He will give it to me.' Then the memory of his mother filled his mind with tenderest recollections, and he said: 'I had a good Christian mother, and her prayers have followed me thus far through life.'"—*Lincoln Scrapbook*, Library of Congress, p. 54.

Mrs. Pomeroy was a Baptist, and had recently buried her husband. She volunteered for service as a nurse in the soldiers' hospitals in Washington, and in the serious illness of Mr. Lincoln's two sons she was installed as nurse in the White House and remained these several months.

She relates that she frequently saw him reading his mother's Bible, and that he found especial comfort in the Psalms.

Mrs. Pomeroy relates:

> "On July 9, 1863, while sitting at the dinner table he could not eat, for he seemed so full of trouble as he said, 'The battle of Port Hudson is now going on, and many lives will be

sacrificed on both sides, but I have done the best I could, trusting in God, for if they gain this important point, we are lost; and, on the other hand, if we could only gain it we shall have gained much; and I think we shall, for we have a great deal to thank God for, for we have Vicksburg and Gettysburg already.' Mrs. Pomeroy said, 'Mr. Lincoln, prayer will do what nothing else will; can you not pray?' 'Yes, I will,' he replied, and while the tears were dropping from his face he said, 'Pray for me,' and picked up a Bible and went to his room. 'Could all the people of the nation have overheard the earnest petition that went up from that inner chamber as it reached the ears of the nurse, they would have fallen upon their knees with tearful and reverential sympathy.' That night he received a dispatch announcing a Union victory. He went directly to Mrs. Pomeroy's room, his face beaming with joy, saying: 'Good news! Good news! Port Hudson is ours! The victory is ours, and God is good.' When the lady replied, 'Nothing like prayer in times of trouble,' Mr. Lincoln said, 'Yes, O yes—praise—prayer and praise go together.' Mrs. Pomeroy in relating this incident, said, 'I do believe he was a true Christian, though he had very little

confidence in himself.'"

Most valuable, and also most familiar, of these intimate glimpses into the life of Mr. Lincoln during his years in the White House is the book of Frank B. Carpenter called, *Six Months in the White House: The Inner Life of Abraham Lincoln*. The book was the work of the artist who painted the large picture of the Signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. For six months in 1864 he lived in the White House where a room was fitted up for his use, and Mr. Lincoln and all the members of the Cabinet sat to him repeatedly. It is hardly necessary to quote this book, which is widely scattered, and everywhere available. It is enough to remind ourselves that the picture it gives us of Mr. Lincoln in those solemn days after the war had settled down to a clear issue of slavery or freedom, and had become in the mind of the nation and the world not a political but a moral issue, is one of dignity and heroism and of definite Christian character.

An incident following the death of Willie has been related on the alleged authority of Rev. Francis Vinton, rector of Trinity Church, New York, who was an acquaintance of Mrs. Lincoln and visited Washington and called at the White House soon after that sad event. As reported, he said to Mr. Lincoln:

> "'Your son is alive.'
>
> "'Alive!' exclaimed Mr. Lincoln. 'Surely you mock me.'
>
> "'No, sir; believe me,' replied Dr. Vinton; 'it is a most comforting doctrine of the Church, founded upon the words of Christ Himself.'

"Mr. Lincoln threw his arm around Dr. Vinton's neck, laid his head upon his breast, and sobbed aloud, '*Alive? Alive?*'

"Dr. Vinton, greatly moved, said: 'My dear sir, believe this, for it is God's most precious truth. Seek not your son among the dead; he is not there; he lives today in paradise! Think of the full import of the words I have quoted. The Sadducees, when they questioned Jesus, had no other conception than that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were dead and buried. Mark the reply: "Now that the dead *are* raised, even Moses showed at the bush when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, *for all live unto Him*!" Did not the great patriarch mourn his sons as dead? "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin, also!" But Joseph and Simeon were both living, though he believed it not. Indeed, Joseph being taken from him was the eventual means of the preservation of the whole family. And so God has called your son into His upper kingdom—a kingdom and an existence as real, more real, than your own. It may be that he too, like Joseph, has gone, in God's good providence, to be the salvation of *his* father's household. It

> is a part of the Lord's plan for the ultimate happiness of you and yours. Doubt it not.'
>
> "Dr. Vinton [so the narrative proceeds] told Lincoln that he had a sermon upon the subject. Mr. Lincoln asked him to send it to him as early as possible, and thanked him repeatedly for his cheering and hopeful words. When Lincoln received the sermon he read it over and over, and had a copy made for his own private use. A member of the family said that Mr. Lincoln's views in relation to spiritual things seemed changed from that hour."—CARPENTER, pp. 117-19.

Such an incident cannot be wholly false; nor is it quite conceivable that it is wholly true. That Lincoln talked with Dr. Vinton concerning his recent sorrow, and was comforted by his assurance of immortality is not improbable, nor that he accepted Dr. Vinton's sermon and had it copied; but the scene as finally described for the public has every appearance of being much colored.

In 1883 Captain Oldroyd published a collection of Lincoln anecdotes which had long been making, most of them good and many of them excellent, but some of them resting on very dubitable authority. Among those of this class was one that has been widely quoted, perhaps most widely of any in his book:[51]

> "Shortly before his death an Illinois clergyman asked Lincoln, 'Do you love Jesus?' Mr. Lincoln solemnly

> replied: 'When I left Springfield I asked the people to pray for me. I was not a Christian. When I buried my son, the severest trial of my life, I was not a Christian. But when I went to Gettysburg and saw the graves of thousands of our soldiers, I then and there consecrated myself to Christ. Yes, I *do* love Jesus.'
>
> "Reticent as he was, and shy of discoursing much of his own mental exercises, these few utterances now have a value with those who knew him which his dying words scarcely have possessed."—*Lincoln Memorial Album*, p. 105.

Where Captain Oldroyd obtained this incident is now not known; probably it came to him as a newspaper clipping. It bears no marks that commend it to our confidence. We are not informed who this Illinois clergyman was; there may not have been any such clergyman. If there was,—

"*E'en ministers they hae been kenned*

In holy rapture,

A rousing whid at times to vend,

And nail 't wi' Scripture."

Mr. Lincoln made many references to God, but very few to Jesus, and then not by name, but by some title, as "the Saviour of the World." The word "love" was one which he almost never used. That he should

have said to a man unnamed "I do love Jesus" is highly improbable; and the account of his conversation as given here is not probable. We gain nothing by reliance on such unsupported allegations.

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CHAPTER XIX

FROM THE HOUSETOPS AND IN THE CLOSET

THIS part of our inquiry draws near its close. We have reserved for this chapter a selection from those religious expressions of Abraham Lincoln which belong to his mature years, and which are indisputably his. They are largely in addresses, proclamations, and official documents. In them religion is, as a rule, an incidental subject. But it finds frequent expression.

Here no literary criticism is necessary, for there is no question about the accuracy of the report. We shall quote nothing that is not contained in an accredited compilation of Lincoln's papers or addresses, omitting all that is disputable or open to the suspicion of glossation or coloring or exaggeration.

There is only one question, Was Abraham Lincoln sincere in these utterances? Did he speak them as his own profound convictions, or because he was expected to say something of this sort, and took refuge in pious commonplaces? Both statements have been made concerning these and like utterances. Let us read them with an open mind and discover what evidence they bear of their own sincerity.

These are not reports of private conversations, or utterances addressed to small groups. These are the words which Lincoln uttered in the ears of all men; and they afford some evidence of the faith that was in him.

—

In Lincoln's first annual Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, dated October 3, 1863, after reciting the blessings of God to the nation in the harvest and in the success of our arms, he said:

> "No human counsel hath devised, nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.
>
> "It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the American people. I do, therefore, invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens. And I recommend to them that, while offering up the ascriptions justly due Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil

> strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation, and to restore it, as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes, to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity, and union."

In the summer of 1864, a resolution was adopted concurrently by the Senate and House of Representatives, requesting the President to appoint a day of prayer, Mr. Lincoln issued the following proclamation, July 7, 1864, in which, after quoting the words of the resolution, he continued:

> "Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, cordially concurring with the Congress of the United States in the penitential and pious sentiments expressed in the aforesaid resolutions, and heartily approving of the devotional design and purpose thereof, do hereby appoint the first Thursday of August next to be observed by the people of the United States as a day of national humiliation and prayer.
>
> "I do hereby further invite and request the heads of the executive departments of this government, together with all legislators, all judges and magistrates, and all other persons exercising authority in the land, whether civil, military, or

> naval, and all soldiers, seamen, and marines in the national service and all the other loyal and law-abiding people of the United States, to assemble in their preferred places of public worship on that day, and there and then to render to the Almighty and merciful Ruler of the Universe such homages and such confessions, and to offer to Him such supplications, as the Congress of the United States have, in their aforesaid resolution, so solemnly, so earnestly, and so reverently recommended."

Mr. Lincoln issued another special thanksgiving proclamation on May 9, 1864, saying:

> "Enough is known of army operations within the last five days to claim an especial gratitude to God, while what remains undone demands our most sincere prayers to, and reliance upon, Him without whom all human effort is vain. I recommend that all patriots, at their homes, in their places of public worship, and wherever they may be, unite in common thanksgiving and prayer to Almighty God."

In a response to a serenade at the White House, on May 9, 1864, following the Battle of the Wilderness, Mr. Lincoln said:

> "While we are grateful to all the brave men and officers for the events

> of the past few days, we should, above all, be very grateful to Almighty God, who gives us victory."

May 18, 1864, in a letter of reply to a deputation of ministers who presented to him resolutions adopted by the Methodist General Conference, he said, "God bless the Methodist Church—bless all the churches—and blessed be God, who, in this our great trial giveth us the churches."

In a letter to a committee consisting of the Rev. Dr. Ide, Honorable J. R. Doolittle, and Honorable A. Hubbell, May 30, 1864, Mr. Lincoln says:

> "In response to the preamble and resolutions of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, which you did me the honor to present, I can only thank you for thus adding to the effective and almost unanimous support which the Christian communities are so zealously giving to the country, and to liberty. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive how it could be otherwise with anyone professing Christianity, or even having ordinary perceptions of right and wrong. To read the Bible, as the word of God Himself, that 'In the sweat of *thy* face shalt thou eat bread,' and to preach therefrom that, 'In the sweat of *other men's* faces shalt thou eat bread,' to my mind can scarcely be reconciled with honest sincerity. When brought to my final reckoning may I have to

> answer for robbing no man of his goods; yet more tolerable even this, than for robbing one of himself and all that was his. When, a year or two ago, those professedly holy men of the South met in the semblance of prayer and devotion, and, in the name of Him who said, 'As ye would all men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them,' appealed to the Christian world to aid them in doing to a whole race of men as they would have no man do unto themselves, to my thinking they contemned and insulted God and His church far more than did Satan when he tempted the Saviour with the kingdoms of earth. The devil's attempt was no more false, and far less hypocritical. But let me forbear, remembering it is also written, 'Judge not, lest ye be judged.'"

On December 7, 1863, in making announcement of Union success in East Tennessee, he closed as follows: "I recommend that all loyal people do, on receipt of this information, assemble at their places of worship and render special homage and gratitude to Almighty God for His great advancement of the national cause."

His Third Annual Message to Congress, December 8, 1863, began: "Another year of health, and of sufficiently abundant harvests, has passed. For these, and especially for the improved condition of our national affairs, our renewed and profoundest gratitude to God is due."

After the capture of Mobile and Atlanta, on September 3, 1864, Mr. Lincoln issued his fourth special thanksgiving proclamation, calling on all people to offer thanksgiving to God "for His mercy in preserving our national existence"; and also "that prayer be made for divine protection to our soldiers and their leaders in the field, who have so often and so gallantly periled their lives in battling with the enemy; and for blessings and comforts from the Father of Mercies to the sick, wounded, and prisoners, and to the orphans and widows of those who have fallen in the service of their country, and that He will continue to uphold the Government of the United States against all the effects of public enemies and secret foes."

He issued a proclamation calling for thanksgiving for victories, July 15, 1863:

> "It has pleased Almighty God to hearken to the supplication and prayers of an afflicted people, and to vouchsafe to the army and navy of the United States victories on land and on sea so signal and so effective as to furnish reasonable grounds for augmented confidence that the union of these States will be maintained, their Constitution preserved, and their peace and prosperity permanently restored. But these victories have been accorded not without sacrifice of life, limb, health, and liberty, incurred by brave, loyal, and patriotic citizens. Domestic affliction in every part of the country follows in the train of

these fearful bereavements. It is meet and right to recognize and confess the presence of the Almighty Father and the power of His hand equally in these triumphs and in these sorrows.

"Now, therefore, be it known that I do set apart Thursday, the 6th day of August next, to be observed as a day of national thanksgiving, praise, and prayer, and I invite the people of the United States to assemble on that occasion in their customary places of worship, and, in the forms approved by their own consciences, render the homage due to the Divine Majesty for the wonderful things He has done in the nation's behalf, and invoke the influence of His Holy Spirit to subdue the anger which has produced and so long sustained a needless and cruel rebellion, to change the hearts of the insurgents, to guide the counsels of the government with wisdom adequate to so great a national emergency, and to visit with tender care and consolation throughout the length and breadth of our land all those who, through the vicissitudes of marches, voyages, battles, and sieges, have been brought to suffer in mind, body, or estate, and finally to lead the whole nation through the paths of repentance and submission to the Divine Will back to the perfect

> enjoyment of union and fraternal peace."

On March 30, 1863, President Lincoln issued a proclamation appointing another national fast-day. It reads as follows:

> "Whereas, the Senate of the United States, devoutly recognizing the supreme authority and just government of Almighty God in all the affairs of men and of nations has by a resolution requested the President to designate and set apart a day for national prayer and humiliation:
>
> "And whereas, it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord:
>
> "And insomuch as we know that by His divine law nations, like individuals, are subject to punishments and chastisements in this world, and may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war which now desolates the land

may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people? We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown; but we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God who made us:

"It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, and confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness:

"Now, therefore, in compliance with the request and fully concurring in the views of the Senate, I do by this my proclamation designate and set apart Thursday, the 30th day of April, 1863, as a day of national humiliation, fasting, and prayer. And

> I do hereby request all the people to abstain on that day from their ordinary secular pursuits, and to unite at their several places of public worship and their respective homes in keeping the day holy to the Lord, and devoted to the humble discharge of the religious duties proper to that solemn occasion. All this being done in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by divine teachings, that the united cry of the nation will be heard on high, and answered with blessings no less than the pardon of our national sins, and the restoration of our now divided and suffering country to its former happy condition of unity and peace."

In 1863 Washington's Birthday occurred on Sunday, and Rev. Alexander Reed, superintendent of the United States Christian Commission, invited Mr. Lincoln to preside at a meeting in the House of Representatives on that day. In reply Mr. Lincoln said: "Whatever shall be sincerely, and in God's name, devised for the good of the soldier and seaman in their hard spheres of duty, can scarcely fail to be blest.... The birthday of Washington and the Christian Sabbath coinciding this year, and suggesting together the highest interests of this life and of that to come, is most propitious for the meeting proposed."

January 5, 1863, in reply to a letter, Mr. Lincoln wrote the following:

> "It is most cheering and encouraging for me that in the efforts which I have made and am making for the restoration of a righteous peace for our country, I am upheld and sustained by the good wishes and prayers of God's people. No one is more deeply than myself aware that without His favor our highest wisdom is but as foolishness and that our most strenuous efforts would avail nothing in the shadow of His displeasure."
>
> "I am conscious of no desire for my country's welfare that is not in consonance with His will, and no plan upon which we may not ask His blessing. It seems to me that if there be one subject upon which all good men may unitedly agree, it is imploring the gracious favor of the God of Nations upon the struggles our people are making for the preservation of their precious birthright of civil and religious liberty."

Second Annual Message to Congress, December 1, 1862:

> "While it has not pleased the Almighty to bless us with a return of peace, we can but press on, guided by the best light He gives us, trusting that in His own good time and wise way all will be well."

Reply to a committee of colored people who presented him with a Bible, September 4, 1864:

> "This occasion would seem fitting for a lengthy response to the address which you have just made. I would make one if prepared; but I am not. I would promise to respond in writing had not experience taught me that business will not allow me to do so. I can only say now, as I have often before said, it has always been a sentiment with me that all mankind should be free. So far as able, within my sphere, I have always acted as I believe to be right and just; and I have done all I could for the good of mankind generally. In letters and documents sent from this office, I have expressed myself better than I now can.
>
> "In regard to this great Book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to man. All the good Saviour gave to the world was communicated through this Book. But for it we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it. To you I return my most sincere thanks for this very elegant copy of the great Book of God which you present."—Complete Works of Lincoln by John G. Nicolay and John Hay. New and Enlarged Edition,

> Twelve Volumes. New York: Francis D. Tandy Company, 1905, X, 217-18.

Compiling these and kindred passages from his authentic works, his two secretaries, Nicolay and Hay, were impressed anew with the manifest sincerity and deep religious conviction which they expressed. Commenting upon these as a whole, and having particularly in mind certain stories which given to the public could not, from their date and nature, have been mere conventional expressions, and others so manifestly personal that no consideration of the public opinion could have had any weight with him, they said:

> "He was a man of profound and intense religious feeling. We have no purpose of attempting to formulate his creed: we question if he himself ever did so. There have been swift witnesses who, judging from expressions uttered in his callow youth, have called him an atheist; and others who, with the most laudable intentions, have remembered improbable conversations which they bring forward to prove at once his orthodoxy and their own intimacy with him. But leaving aside these apocryphal endeavors, we have only to look at his authentic public and private utterances to see how deep and strong in all the latter part of his life was the current of his religious thought and emotion. He continually

invited and appreciated, at their highest value, the prayers of good people. The pressure of the tremendous problems by which he was surrounded; the awful moral significance of the conflict in which he was the chief combatant; the overwhelming sense of personal responsibility which never left him for an hour—all contributed to produce, in a temperament naturally serious and predisposed to a spiritual view of life and conduct, a sense of reverent acceptance of the guidance of a superior Power. From the morning when, standing amid the falling snowflakes in the railway car at Springfield, he asked the prayers of his neighbors in those touching phrases whose echo rose that night in invocations from thousands of family altars, to that memorable hour when on the steps of the Capitol he humbled himself before his Creator in the sublime words of the Second Inaugural, there is not an expression known to have come from his lips or pen but proves that he held himself answerable in every act of his career to a more august tribunal than any on earth. The fact that he was not a communicant of any church, and that he was singularly reserved in regard to his personal religious life, gives only the greater force to these

striking proofs of his profound reverence and faith.

"In final substantiation of this assertion, we subjoin two papers from the hand of the President, one official and the other private, which bear within themselves the imprint of a sincere devotion and a steadfast reliance upon the power and benignity of an overruling Providence. The first is an order which he issued on the 16th of November, 1864, in the observance of Sunday.

Lincoln's Sunday Rest Order, November 15, 1862:

"The President, Commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy, desires and enjoins the orderly observance of the Sabbath by the officers and men in the military and naval service. The importance for man and beast of the prescribed weekly rest, the sacred rights of Christian soldiers and sailors, a becoming deference to the best sentiments of a Christian people, and a due regard for the Divine Will, demand that Sunday labor in the army and navy be reduced to the measure of strict necessity.

"The discipline and character of the national forces should not suffer, nor the cause they defend be imperiled by the profanation of the day or

name of the Most High. 'At this time of public distress'—adopting the words of Washington in 1776—'men may find enough to do in the service of God and their Country without abandoning themselves to vice and immorality.' The first general order issued by the Father of his Country, after the Declaration of Independence, indicates the spirit in which our institutions were founded and should ever be defended. 'The General hopes and trusts that every officer and man will endeavor to live and act as becomes a Christian soldier defending the dearest rights and liberties of his country.'

"The date of this remarkable order leaves no possibility for the insinuation that it sprang from any political purposes or intention. Mr. Lincoln had just been re-elected by an overwhelming majority; his own personal popularity was unbounded; there was no temptation for hypocrisy or deceit. There is no explanation of the order except that it was the offspring of sincere convictions.

"But if it may be said that this was, after all, an exoteric utterance springing from those relations of religion and good government which the wisest rulers have always recognized in their intercourse with

> the people, we will give another document of which nothing of the sort can be said. It is a paper which Mr. Lincoln wrote in September, 1862, while his mind was burdened with the weightiest question of his life,—the weightiest with which this country has had to grapple. Wearied with all the considerations of law and of expediency with which he had been struggling for two years, he retired within himself and tried to bring some order into his thoughts by rising above the wrangling of men and parties, and pondering the relations of human government to the Divine. In this frame of mind, absolutely detached from any earthly considerations, he wrote this meditation. It has never been published. It was not written to be seen of men. It was penned in the awful sincerity of a perfectly honest soul trying to bring himself into closer communion with its Maker.

Meditation on the Divine will, September [30], 1862:

> "The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both may be, and one must be, wrong. God cannot be for and against the same thing at the same time. In the present Civil War it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the

purpose of either party; and yet the best instrumentalities, working just as they do, are of the best adaptation to effect His purpose. I am almost ready to say that this is probably true: that God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet. By His mere great power on the minds of the now contestants He could have saved or destroyed the Union without a human contest. Yet the contest began. And, having begun, He could give the final victory to either side any day. Yet the contest proceeds."—NICOLAY AND HAY, Life of Lincoln, *Century*, August, 1889. Vol. 35, pp. 567-68.

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PART III: THE RELIGION OF LINCOLN

CHAPTER XX

WHAT LINCOLN WAS NOT

It is amazing to discover how many forms of faith and non-faith have claimed Abraham Lincoln.

"*Seven cities strove for Homer, dead,*

Through which the living Homer begged his bread."

More than seven churches have striven for the dead Abraham Lincoln, some of whom would not even now admit to their membership a living man who professed his sentiments.

Before we undertake the difficult task of assessing the real faith of Abraham Lincoln, let us dispose of a few of the claims that have been made on his behalf, or the charges that have been made against him, and which clearly have no sufficient weight of evidence. Let us ask first,

Was Abraham Lincoln an atheist?

Herndon declared that Lincoln was an infidel, "sometimes bordering on atheism." This last phrase

has been overstrained. What Herndon appears to have meant was that in some of Lincoln's blackest hours of gloom his mind hung over that utter void; and he more than hints that in such hours Lincoln's mind was scarcely sound. Herndon was far from believing or meaning to charge that atheism was Lincoln's real view of God and the world. The contrary is shown in a score of places in Herndon's works and letters.

Some years ago the *Open Court* of Chicago contained an article by Theodore Stanton, quoted from the *Westminster Review*. It said:

> "That Lincoln was an orthodox Christian nobody pretends to assert. But his friends and biographers differ as to how much of a Christian he was. If Lincoln had lived and died an obscure Springfield lawyer and politician, he would unquestionably have been classed by his neighbors among freethinkers. But as is customary with the Church, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, when Lincoln became one of the great of the world, an attempt was made to claim him.... The shrewd politician who has not an elastic conscience—and that was Lincoln's case—simply keeps mum on religious subjects, or, when he must touch on the subject, deals only in platitudes, and this is just what Lincoln did. Lincoln thought little on religious subjects, and read less. That, when left to himself, he was quite indifferent to

> religion, is frequently evident in the acts of his life."—*Open Court*, September 24, 1891, pp. 2962-63, quoting *Westminster Review* of September, 1890.

This statement was not sufficiently radical for one reader of the *Open Court*, who thought that Mr. Stanton had made Lincoln out to have been virtually an agnostic, and who wished to prove him an atheist. He wrote an article in which he said:

> "Free-thinker means anything or nothing.... Plain words are the best. That Lincoln was *A-theos* connotes a definite attitude toward the great religious chimera, and really defines Mr. Lincoln's position more closely than any of Mr. Stanton's epithets [as, e.g., Agnostic]. It is positive, not negative, indicates what the man professedly was rather than what he was not or what he oppugned. We are in position to define his life-creed with all due measure of exactness."—"What Was Abraham Lincoln's Creed?" by George M. McCrie, *Open Court*, November 26, 1891.

This writer then proceeded to define Mr. Lincoln's creed in terms of atheism. But his argument was based on a subjective scheme of philosophy, a kind of Hylo-Idealism derived from Hegel more than from Lincoln, and one which it is safe to affirm Lincoln would neither have admitted nor even understood.

Some time after, the same journal had a third and very different article, which said:

> "Lincoln was an extremely religious man, though not a technical Christian. He thought deeply, and his opinions were positive. His seriousness was a characteristic trait, showing itself even in his genuine good humor. His very jokes were a part of his seriousness.... Lincoln was an extremely practical man. He believed not for belief's sake, but for his own sake. He made a practice of religion; he used it. His religion was his life, and his life was his religious service. It was his own public profession. Religion was a fact to him. He believed in prayer, because he found use for it: and when the fate of the Union seemed to waver, when doubt and despair hovered over the land and the future was uncertain, Lincoln often shut himself within his room and offered up his prayer to God. 'So, many times,' he said, 'I was forced to my knees, not knowing where else to go.'
>
> "While there is considerable in his writings to indicate a strong faith in God and prayer, there is little to indicate his beliefs regarding Christ, the Bible, etc. But the very absence of anything on those points is good evidence that he did not hold the views that have been attributed to

him....

"He was a firm believer in the 'great and good and merciful God,' but not in a revengeful or cruel God who could consign them to an eternal hell when nothing good to those who suffered could possibly come from such punishment. He believed in and used prayer as a means to bring himself in closer relations with right in everything.... He believed in 'universal inspiration and miracles under law,' and that all things, both matter and mind, are governed by law. He believed that all creation is an evolution under law, not a special creation of the Supreme Being. He hoped for a joyous meeting in the world to come with many loved ones gone before. He believed that Christianity consists in being, not believing; in loving 'the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself.' He believed that the Bible is a book to be understood and appreciated as any other book, not merely to be accepted as a divine creation of infallibility. He believed in the man Christ, not in the God Christ.... He was once an admirer of Volney, Paine, and Voltaire; later of Theodore Parker, Emerson, and Channing. He was once a scoffer of religion; later a supporter."—R. C. ROPER, Religious Beliefs of Abraham Lincoln, *Open*

Court, 1903, pp. 76-85.

Whatever Abraham Lincoln was, he was not an atheist. If any other convenient term were to be applied to him, it would be necessary that the term itself should be defined. Thus, Lyman Abbott has spoken of Lincoln as an agnostic, meaning that Lincoln did not find himself in position to affirm dogmatically on certain of the articles of faith. This article by Dr. Abbott was particularly illuminating as discriminating between the measure of uncertainty which a man may feel in the matter of positive declaration of his views, while cherishing in his heart and manifesting in his life the essentials of a Christian faith. It was published as an editorial in reply to a letter of inquiry, and both are worth reprinting entire:

> "'My dear Dr. Abbott: You are quoted in the New York *Press* of October 15 as having referred in your Yale sermon to Abraham Lincoln in the following terms: "Agnostic though he was." Are you correct in the implication? If so, I should greatly like to know, as it is a subject in which I am much interested. J. G. Holland says, in his *Life of Lincoln*, page 61 ff., "He believed in God, and in His personal supervision of the affairs of men.... This unwavering faith in a divine Providence began at his mother's knee, and ran like a thread of gold through all the inner experiences of his life"; and much more to the same purpose. You are doubtless familiar with his words on

> leaving Springfield for Washington: "He [Washington] would never have succeeded except for the aid of divine Providence upon which he at all times relied. On that same Almighty Being I place my reliance. Pray that I may receive that divine assistance without which I cannot succeed, but with which success is certain." The first inaugural would seem to indicate a most pronounced Christian sentiment. Not to consume too much of your time, I might refer further to Nicolay and Hay's *Life*, the following passages: Vol. VI, p. 539, which contains a statement of Lincoln's religious principles; also, same volume, pp. 323, 324, 327, 328, 341, 342.
>
> R. A. A.'"

To this letter Dr. Abbott replied:

> "The life of Abraham Lincoln appears to me to furnish a very striking illustration both of the difference between theology and religion and of the way in which religious experience is often developed in the life of a true man, and is accompanied by a real though generally quite unconscious change in theological opinion. Mr. Herndon, in his *Life of Lincoln*, portrays the earlier religious faith of Mr. Lincoln, Nicolay and Hay his later religious

faith: neither biographer is able to find that he ever formulated his own creed, neither is able to formulate one for him. Yet between the religious convictions of the period when he wrote an essay against Christianity, which, fortunately for his reputation, a wise friend threw into the fire, and the period when he wrote his second inaugural address, there is a difference which cannot be measured by the mere lapse of years.

"Agnostic? What is an agnostic? Huxley invented the phrase to define his own position in contrast with that of his friends whom he called gnostics because they had each a theory of the universe and he had none. He more specifically defines the basis of his no-theory of the universe in a pathetic letter to Charles Kingsley (*Life and Letters*, Vol. II, pp. 233-239): 'It is no use to talk to me of analogies and probabilities. I know what I mean when I say I believe in the law of the inverse squares, and I will not rest my lifelong hopes upon weaker convictions. I dare not, if I would.' Compare with this Mr. Herndon's measure of Mr. Lincoln's earlier habit of thought: 'As already expressed, Mr. Lincoln had no faith. In order to believe, he must see and feel, and thrust his hand into the place. He must taste, smell, or

handle before he had faith or even belief.' Or compare Mrs. Lincoln's expression concerning her husband's religious opinions, as quoted by Mr. Herndon: 'Mr. Lincoln had no faith and no hope, in the usual acceptance of those words. He never joined a church; but still, as I believe, he was a religious man by nature. He first seemed to think about the subject when our Willie died, and then more than ever about the time he went to Gettysburg; but it was a kind of poetry in his nature; and he was never a technical Christian.'

"Religion is always a kind of poetry. Faith is kin to imagination; both faith and imagination look upon the unseen and refuse to base life merely upon the senses or upon mathematical formularies like the law of the inverse squares. This poetry is often quite dissociated from philosophy, or is even inconsistent with the philosophy which the individual entertains. But Mr. Lincoln's early philosophy prepared for his later religious experience. Mr. Herndon reports him as saying: 'There are no accidents in my philosophy. The past is the cause of the present, and the present will be the cause of the future. All these are links in the endless chain stretching from the Infinite to the finite.' With this philosophy of

fatalism was a profound faith in justice, a profound reverence for it, and an uncompromising obedience to it. At first he did not put this philosophy and this faith together. He who does put them together, that is, he who infuses this philosophy in an overruling cause with this faith, which is a 'kind of poetry,' in the supremacy of righteousness, comes to a faith in a righteous God, who deserves our reverence, not because he is great, but because he is good.

"When Abraham Lincoln began to feel the burden of the nation resting upon him, and felt it too great a burden for him to carry unaided, he wanted the sympathy of all men and women in the country who with him believed in a Power directing the course of human history greater than the actors in it, and who also believed in eternal justice; and he asked their prayers. As the conflict went on and the burden grew heavier and heavier, his faith in righteousness more and more infused his belief in a superhuman power and transformed it into a belief in a righteous God; but it was, till the last, a belief in a God of justice rather than a Christ of pity, even as it phrased itself in that most religious utterance of his life, his second inaugural: 'Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this

mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid with another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"

"There is no evidence that Mr. Lincoln had become a gnostic, or that he had a comprehensive scheme of the universe, or that he had either wrought out a system of theology for himself or accepted any that had been wrought out by others; but there is abundant evidence that he had learned in the four years of tragedy a lesson of dependence and trust, that he had insensibly put together his belief in a supreme Power and his faith in righteousness, and that thus there had been born in him faith in a supreme righteous Power, whose will we may help to carry out, and on whose wisdom and strength we may rely in achieving it. It is thus that the life of Abraham Lincoln illustrates both how a reverent agnostic may be deeply religious and how the life of service and self-sacrifice leads through doubt to faith.—L. A."—*The Outlook*,

November 17, 1906.

Was Abraham Lincoln a Roman Catholic?

The question is absurd, and worth asking only that it may receive a simple negative answer. Yet, singularly, a report was current and somewhat widely believed in 1860 that Abraham Lincoln had been baptized as a Roman Catholic and was himself a renegade from that faith. The rumor appears to have had two roots. First was the fact that much missionary work was done in early Illinois by Jesuit priests; and it was assumed, not only contrary to every fact but to every element of probability, that Abraham Lincoln had been baptized by one of them. The other was the fact that he acted as attorney for Rev. Charles Chiniquy, who after fifty years in the Church of Rome came out from that communion and became a notable antagonist of the church in which he had been reared. His unsparing criticisms led to various attacks upon him through the courts and otherwise. When Lincoln was elected President much was made of the fact that Lincoln had been Father Chiniquy's attorney, and the rumor that he also was a renegade Catholic gained wide currency.

Chiniquy professed to see in these rumors a peril to the life of Mr. Lincoln, and both then and at intervals during his administration warned the President that his life was in danger. The scarcely concealed favor of the Vatican toward the cause of the South did not tend to allay this anxiety. The fact that among those concerned in the plot which finally ended in the assassination of the President were several Roman Catholics, revived these reports immediately after his death, and they are occasionally recalled even now.

So far as our present inquiry is concerned, we have

only to ask and answer the question. Mr. Lincoln was not in any period of his life affiliated in any way with the Roman Catholic Church.

Was Abraham Lincoln a Spiritualist?

During Mr. Lincoln's occupancy of the White House, there were several rumors to the effect that President and Mrs. Lincoln were both Spiritualists. A definite claim that Mr. Lincoln fully believed in Spiritualism was set forth in 1891 by a medium named Mrs. Nettie Colburn Maynard. She wrote a book relating in detail almost innumerable sittings which she alleged were attended by Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln. According to her story her mediumship began in her childhood in 1845. At the outbreak of the war she was lecturing and giving public séances and went to Washington to gain a furlough for her brother. She learned of Mr. Lincoln's interest in Spiritualism, and of the visits to the White House of two mediums, Charles Colchester and Charles Foster. She was invited to the White House, where, if we are to credit her story, she imparted to Mr. Lincoln very nearly all the wisdom which he possessed during the period of the Civil War.

We learn from other sources that Lincoln permitted two or three mediums to come to the White House and to tell him what the spirits said he ought to know; but Lincoln said of them that the advice of the spirits, as thus received, was as contradictory as the voices of his own Cabinet, of whose meetings the séances reminded him.

The last attempt to make Mr. Lincoln out a Spiritualist is by Mrs. Grace Garrett Durand, in a privately printed book issued since Sir Oliver Lodge's *Raymond*. She claims to have talked with Raymond,

with William T. Stead, and other people, as well as with Mrs. Eddy, from whom she expects to receive additional material supplementary to her *Science and Health, and Key to the Scriptures*. She is, however, according to her own account, especially intimate with Mr. Lincoln. She says:

> "President Lincoln has himself told me in many conversations I have had with him from the spirit world that he was directed in his great work during the Civil War by his mother and others in the spirit world. Mr. Lincoln, or 'Uncle Abe,' as he has lovingly asked me to call him, said that had he respected his mother's advice the day of his assassination he would not have gone to the theater the fateful night, as his mother had that day warned him not to go."

If Mr. Lincoln's spirit has indeed requested this lady to call him "Uncle Abe" he has accorded her a liberty which was infrequent during his lifetime. Near neighbors of Mr. Lincoln during his years in Springfield inform me that no one called him "Abe" to his face, and that very few even of his political opponents thus spoke of him. He habitually addressed his partner as "Billy," but Mr. Herndon uniformly called him "Mr. Lincoln." One could wish that Abraham Lincoln in heaven might be at least as dignified as Abraham Lincoln was on earth.[52]

Was Abraham Lincoln superstitious?

Both President and Mrs. Lincoln were superstitious. They believed in dreams and signs, he more in

dreams and she more in signs. When Mrs. Lincoln was away from him for a little time, visiting in Philadelphia in 1863, and Tad with her, Lincoln thought it sufficiently important to telegraph, lest the mail should be too slow, and sent her this message:

> "Executive Mansion,
> "Washington, June 9, 1863.
>
> "MRS. LINCOLN,
> "Philadelphia, Pa.
>
> "Think you better put Tad's pistol away. I had an ugly dream about him.
>
> "A. Lincoln."
>
> —Quoted in facsimile in *Harper's Magazine* for February, 1897; *Lincoln's Home Life in the White House*, by Leslie J. Perry.

In Lamon's book of *Recollections*, published in 1895, a very different book from his Life of Lincoln, he devotes an entire chapter to Lincoln's dreams and presentiments. He relates the story of the dream which Lincoln had not long before his assassination wherein he saw the East Room of the White House containing a catafalque with the body of an assassinated man lying upon it. Lincoln tried to remove himself from the shadow of this dream by recalling a story of life in Indiana, but could not shake off the gloom of it. Lamon says:

> "He was no dabbler in divination, astrology, horoscopy, prophecy, ghostly lore, or witcheries of any sort.... The moving power of dreams

> and visions of an extraordinary character he ascribed, as did the Patriarchs of old, to the Almighty Intelligence that governs the universe, their processes conforming strictly to natural laws."—*Recollections*, p. 120.

In his Life of Lincoln, Lamon tells the story of the dream which Lincoln had late in the year 1860, when resting upon a lounge in his chamber he saw his figure reflected in a mirror opposite with two images, one of them a little paler than the other. It worried Lincoln, and he told his wife about it. She thought it was "a sign that Lincoln was to be elected for a second term and that the paleness of one of the faces indicated that he would not see life through the last term" (p. 477).

As this optical illusion has been so often printed, and has seemed so weirdly prophetic of the event which followed, it may be well to quote an explanation of the incident from an address by Dr. Erastus Eugene Holt, of Portland, Maine:

> "As he lay there upon the couch, every muscle became relaxed as never before.... In this relaxed condition, in a pensive mood and in an effort to recuperate the energies of a wearied mind, his eyes fell upon the mirror in which he could see himself at full length, reclining upon the couch. All the muscles that direct, control, and keep the two eyes together were relaxed; the eyes were allowed to separate, and each

> eye saw a separate and distinct image by itself. The relaxation was so complete, for the time being, that the two eyes were not brought together, as is usual by the action of converging muscles, hence the counterfeit presentiment of himself. He would have seen two images of anything else had he looked for them, but he was so startled by the ghostly appearance that he felt 'a little pang as though something uncomfortable had happened,' and obtained but little rest. What a solace to his wearied mind it would have been if someone could have explained this illusion upon rational grounds!"—Address at Portland, Maine, February 12, 1901, reprinted by William Abbatt, Tarrytown, N. Y., 1916.

Other incidents which relate to Mr. Lincoln's faith in dreams, including one that is said to have occurred on the night preceding his assassination, are well known, and need not be repeated here in detail.

It is not worth while to seek to evade or minimize the element of superstition in Lincoln's life, nor to ask to explain away any part of it. Dr. Johnson admits it in general terms, but makes little of concrete instances:

> "The claim that there was more or less of superstition in his nature, and that he was greatly affected by his dreams, is not to be disputed. Many

> devout Christians today are equally superstitious, and, also, are greatly affected by their dreams. Lincoln grew in an atmosphere saturated with all kinds of superstitious beliefs. It is not strange that some of it should cling to him all his life, just as it was with Garfield, Blaine, and others.
>
> "In 1831, then a young man of twenty-two, Lincoln made his second trip to New Orleans. It was then that he visited a Voodoo fortune teller, that is so important in the eyes of certain people. This, doubtless, was out of mere curiosity, for it was his second visit to a city. This no more indicates a belief in 'spiritualism' than does the fact that a few days before he started on this trip he attended an exhibition given by a traveling juggler, and allowed the magician to cook eggs in his low-crowned, broad-rimmed hat."—*Lincoln the Christian*, p. 29.

I do not agree with this. Superstition was inherent in the life of the backwoods, and Lincoln had his full share of it. Superstition is very tenacious, and people who think that they have outgrown it nearly all possess it. "I was always superstitious," wrote Lincoln to Joshua F. Speed on July 4, 1842. He never ceased to be superstitious.

While superstition had its part in the life and thought of Lincoln, it was not the most outstanding fact in his thinking or his character. For the most part his

thinking was rational and well ordered, but it had in it many elements and some strange survivals—strange until we recognize the many moods of the man and the various conditions of his life and thought in which from time to time he lived.

Was Lincoln a Quaker?

In his autobiographical sketch written for Jesse W. Fell, Mr. Lincoln stated that his paternal grandfather, Abraham Lincoln, emigrated from Rockingham County, Virginia, to Kentucky about 1781 or 1782; "his ancestors, who were Quakers, went to Virginia from Berks County, Pennsylvania." This reference to a remote Quaker ancestry has suggested to some writers the possibility that Mr. Lincoln himself may have been, in conviction, a Quaker.

This suggestion is utilized to its full value and beyond by Henry Bryan Binns, the first English biographer of Lincoln, whose book appeared in 1907, and others have followed his intimations. He says:

> "In some brief autobiographical notes, Lincoln remarks that his ancestors, when they left Berks County, Pennsylvania, were Quakers. The allusion has significance, not merely because it is the only reference to any religious body in these notes, but because it suggests an interesting spiritual affiliation to which we shall refer again later."

He fulfills this promise, and refers to it repeatedly. The Quaker ancestry finds reinforcement in his assurance that the Shipley strain in Nancy Hanks was

"probably" Quaker. These references occur a number of times in the early part of his book, and recur in the concluding chapter with more than a suggestion that Mr. Lincoln continued to bear some of the inherited spiritual qualities of the Quaker.

These suggestions lack evidential value. Lincoln's grandfather's ancestors were believed by him to have been Quakers in Pennsylvania, and their ancestors are believed to have been Puritans in Massachusetts. But the New Englanders no more surely dropped their Massachusetts Puritanism in Pennsylvania than the Pennsylvania Quakers dropped their Quakerism in Virginia and Kentucky. The Quaker ancestry was not forgotten nor was it a thing to be ashamed of, but the distinctive tenets of the Friends had no large part in the working creed of Abraham Lincoln. He respected the Quakers, and on more than one occasion showed his interest in them; but there is no reason to believe that he shared either their theology or their theory of non-resistance. He was compelled to approve some severe measures against American citizens who refused to fight, and a number of Quakers suffered in consequence. Lincoln saw no way to prevent these sufferings altogether, though he did his best to mitigate them, and he always respected the principles of those who held in sincerity the Quaker faith which he did not share.

Was Lincoln a Unitarian or a Universalist?

It is my opinion that Lincoln did not believe in endless punishment, and also that he did not accept the supernatural birth of Christ. The evidence on which these opinions rest has already been indicated. But I do not regard him as a Universalist or a Unitarian. The basis of his religious belief was Calvinism of the most rigid sort. It could accept some

incidental features of other systems, but at heart it was Calvinistic.

I have talked with Rev. Jasper Douthit, of Shelbyville, concerning Unitarianism in central Illinois. He quotes Jenkin Lloyd Jones as saying of his Shelbyville church, that "Unitarianism attempted to locate in the Capitol City of Illinois, but struck the dome of the State House, glanced off, and stuck in the mud at Shelbyville." In some sense the movement of Mr. Douthit is the present survival of the attempt before the Civil War to domesticate Unitarianism in Springfield and vicinity. I have clipped from the *Christian Register* a communication which, without pretending to technical knowledge of the organific principle of the several sects, goes near to the heart of this question:

> "To the editor of the Christian Register:—
>
> "*Apropos* of 'Lincoln Day,' may I ask for *definite information* as to Mr. Lincoln's religious belief? The author of that little pamphlet, 'What do Unitarians Believe?' implies that he is to be numbered among Unitarians, and quotes from the author of *Six Months at the White House* to prove his assertion. Now I don't know *who* the *author* of *Six Months at the White House is*, and care less. His testimony is 'second hand' viewed in any light you please. He may have been a Unitarian himself, though I hardly think he would have used the word 'Saviour,' in speaking of Mr. Lincoln's words, unless Lincoln himself had

used it. At any rate, the only *direct* testimony bearing on Mr. Lincoln's religious views is found in *his own writings*, and I want to quote from his Fast Day proclamation of March 30, 1863, as throwing some light on the subject.

"He says: 'Whereas, it is the duty of nations, as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures, and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.

"'And, insomuch as we know that by His Divine laws, nations, like individuals, are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of Civil War, which now desolates the land, may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people? We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity.

> "'We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own.'
>
> "If this isn't *Calvinism* pure and simple, then I don't know what Calvinism is.
>
> "Now, Mr. Editor, if you can show me any reference in *Mr. Lincoln's own words* that point as strongly toward 'Unitarianism' and those truths which *it* claims as peculiarly its own, I shall be glad to see it.
>
> "CHARLES B. TOLEMAN."

A number of Lincoln's old neighbors, contributing to the Irwin article in denial of the alleged infidelity of Lincoln, affirm that he was a Universalist. In their denial of his infidelity they were correct; and also in their detection of the fallacy of Herndon in which he counted every opinion to be infidel that did not conform to the severe orthodoxy with which he was familiar. As between Herndon and these writers, they were correct. Lincoln's "infidelity" consisted in good part of his denial of eternal punishment. But that did not make him an infidel; neither did it constitute him technically a Universalist. The substratum of his

belief was the old-time predestinarianism which he heard in his youth and never outgrew. How he could make this blend with his wide departures from conventional orthodoxy in other points, those can best understand who have heard the kind of preaching on which Lincoln grew up. Its effect is not easily obliterated.

Was Abraham Lincoln a Methodist?

This question would seem to require no answer, yet it is one that should receive an answer, for claims have been made, and are still current, which imply that Lincoln was actually converted in the Methodist Church, whose doctrine he accepted because Calvinism was repugnant to him; and that while he continued to attend the Presbyterian Church, he was essentially a Methodist.

Lincoln had a very high regard for the Methodist Church. It was rent asunder during the Civil War, and the Northern branch of the church which had long been vigorously anti-slavery was warmly loyal. On May 18, 1864, in a letter of reply to a deputation of ministers from that body, he said, "God bless the Methodist Church—bless all the churches, and blessed be God who, in this our great trial, giveth us the churches."

Reference has been made to the fact that Methodism did not at any time appear greatly to influence the Lincoln family in matters of theology, and that the early environment of the family from the birth of Lincoln was Baptist. I am inclined to think that the Hanks family had Methodist antecedents. Thomas and Nancy Lincoln were married by a Methodist preacher, Rev. Jesse Head. He is known to have been a foe of slavery, and there is some reason to think that the Lincoln family derived some part of its love

of freedom from him.

From time to time Lincoln met Methodist preachers who deeply impressed him. One of these was Rev. Peter Akers, whom he heard in 1837, when Lincoln was twenty-eight years of age.

> "He and a group of associates went out to hear him at a camp-meeting six miles west of Springfield, at the 'Salem Church.' The Rev. Peter Akers was a vigorous and fearless man. He spoke of certain prophecies, and predicted 'the downfall of castes, the end of tyrannies, and the crushing out of slavery.' On the way home they were earnestly discussing the sermon. Lincoln is alleged to have said: 'It was the most instructive sermon, and he is the most impressive preacher, I have ever heard. It is wonderful that God has given such power to men. I firmly believe his interpretation of prophecy, so far as I understand it, and especially about the breaking down of civil and religious tyrannies; and, odd as it may seem, I was deeply impressed that I should be somehow strangely mixed up with them."—TARBELL, *Life of Lincoln*, I, 237.

In the lecture on Abraham Lincoln by Bishop Fowler, as finally prepared for the press, is an incident which apparently was not in its earlier editions. At a reunion of the Seventy-third Illinois Volunteers, held

in Springfield on September 28, 29, 1897, the colonel of that regiment, Rev. James F. Jacquess, D.D., related an incident in which he stated that while he was serving a Methodist Church in Springfield in 1839, Mr. Lincoln attended a series of revival services held in that church, and was converted. The story was heard with great interest by the old soldiers of that regiment, many of whose officers had been Methodist preachers, and it was printed in the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Reunion of Survivors of the Seventy-third Illinois Infantry.

Twelve years later, in 1909, in connection with the Centenary Celebration of the birth of Lincoln, the story was reprinted, with certain added details obtained from the brother of Colonel Jacquess. As thus wrought into literary form, it was printed in the New York *Christian Advocate* in an article entitled "The Conversion of Lincoln," by Rev. Edward L. Watson, of Baltimore.

Already Bishop Fowler, to whom Colonel Jacquess alluded in his address at Springfield as having no adequate account of Lincoln's conversion, had accepted the story and incorporated it into the final version of his famous lecture (*Patriotic Orations*, p. 102). The death of Colonel Jacquess and the additions made by his brother give this incident its permanent form in the *Christian Advocate* article of November 11, 1909.

I am glad to have been able to obtain from the *Christian Advocate* their last copy of that issue, outside their office file, and it appears in full in the Appendix to this volume. It may be accepted as the authoritative form of this story.

That the story as told by Colonel Jacquess must have had some element of truth I think beyond question; that it occurred exactly as he related it, I greatly doubt. The years between 1839 and 1897 numbered fifty-eight, and that is more than ample time for a man's memory to magnify and color incidents almost beyond recognition.

The story as it is thus told lacks confirmatory evidence.[53] If Lincoln was converted in a Methodist Church in 1839 and remained converted, a considerable number of events which occurred in subsequent years might reasonably have been expected to have been otherwise than they really were. Each reader must judge for himself in the light of all that we know of Abraham Lincoln how much or how little of this story is to be accepted as literal fact. The present writer cannot say that he is convinced by the story.

Was Abraham Lincoln a Freemason?

In an address delivered before Harmony Lodge, in Washington, D. C., on January 28, 1914, Dr. L. D. Carman delivered an address, which has since been printed, entitled "Abraham Lincoln, Freemason." In this address it was set forth that "It was not an unusual practice in the early days of Masonry in this country in sparsely settled localities, remote from an active lodge, for several members of the fraternity to get together, form an emergent or occasional lodge, and make Masons." Abraham Lincoln was presumed to have been made such a Mason because of utterances of his, quoted at length, which appeared to show familiarity with Masonic usage.[54]

Those utterances, when examined, carry no such presumption, nor was there any occasion for such an emergent lodge. A lodge existed at Petersburg, near

New Salem, and a number of Lincoln's friends belonged to it; their names are on record. The records of the Springfield Lodge, also, are preserved, and bear no mention of his name; nor is there any evidence so far as the present author knows that on any occasion he was ever in a Masonic Lodge. Orators may use the symbolic language of architecture without knowledge of speculative Masonry, and Lincoln used it so.

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CHAPTER XXI

WHY DID LINCOLN NEVER JOIN THE CHURCH?

MR. THOMAS LEWIS, attorney in Springfield with an office on the same floor and an elder in the First Presbyterian Church, informs us that there was some real expectation that Lincoln would have united with that church in Springfield after his views had been modified through the influence of Dr. Smith. He says that Lincoln attended with considerable regularity a series of revival meetings in progress in the church, but was out of town when application was made for church membership and the officers of the church were disappointed that he did not then unite.

Rev. Dr. Phineas D. Gurley, of Washington, tells of conversations with Lincoln concerning religion and of some expressed desires on the part of Lincoln for church fellowship. His feeling of support in prayer was manifest in his coming to the mid-week prayer service, where, however, as Dr. Gurley affirms, he commonly sat in the pastor's room with an open door, hearing the prayers that were offered but preferring not to attract attention by his visible presence.

The best statement, and one that has been accepted as truly representative of Lincoln's feeling with regard to church membership, is one that comes to us on thoroughly good authority and from the period immediately following Lincoln's death.

Hon. Henry C. Deming, member of Congress from

Connecticut, in a memorial address given before the Legislature of Connecticut, June 8, 1865, related that he had asked Mr. Lincoln why he never united with a church, and Mr. Lincoln answered:

"I have never united myself to any church, because I have found difficulty in giving my assent, without mental reservation, to the long, complicated statements of Christian doctrine which characterize their articles of belief and confessions of faith. When any church will inscribe over its altars, as its sole qualification for membership, the Saviour's condensed statement of the substance of both law and gospel, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself,' that church will I join with all my heart and all my soul" (p. 42).

To his Washington pastor, Rev. Phineas D. Gurley, he said that he could not accept, perhaps, all the doctrines of his Confession of Faith, "but," said he, "if all that I am asked to respond to is what our Lord said were the two great commandments, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and mind and soul and strength, and my neighbor as myself, why, I aim to do that."

Mr. Henry B. Rankin, who wrote his *Reminiscences* in 1916, states that he was a boy in Lincoln's office and his parents knew Lincoln intimately during his years of struggle in New Salem. Mr. Rankin's recollection of a conversation which Lincoln had with Mr. Rankin's mother indicates that Lincoln had some such feeling as far back as his New Salem days. The Rankin family were warm friends of Peter Cartwright, whom they called Uncle Peter, and also of Mr. Lincoln. Mrs. Rankin asked him concerning the rumor that he was an infidel, and Lincoln denied

it; but being pressed to explain why he did not then confess his Christian faith, he gave to her much the answer which in later years he gave to Mr. Deming and to Dr. Gurley (*Reminiscences of Lincoln*, pp. 324-26).

I think, then, we are compelled to accept this threefold testimony as establishing beyond any reasonable doubt the answer that Lincoln himself gave to the question, why he did not unite with the Church. It is a great pity that he was not brought into contact with some form of organized Christianity, orthodox and constructive in its essential teachings, but with conditions of church membership as broad as those of entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Churches have learned a little better than they understood in 1846 that a church creed should be a testimony and not a test; that it is entirely consistent with the organization and ideal of a thoroughly orthodox church to receive into its membership any and every person who loves God and his fellow-man even though he doubts thirty-eight of the thirty-nine articles of the creed and is more or less uncertain about the other one.

But we cannot consider the question of Lincoln's possible church membership and his failure to acquire it without asking whether the fault was wholly that of the churches. Other men beside Abraham Lincoln were more liberal than the churches, including old Mentor Graham, but were able to find a home there; though Graham was ultimately turned out of the so-called "hardshell" church for his warm advocacy of the principles of temperance. Some share of the responsibility for his failure to unite with the Church must belong to Lincoln himself.

It is a hazardous thing to suggest any element short of perfection in the life or thought of any popular hero. Nevertheless let us remind ourselves that Lincoln had the defects of his qualities.

Lincoln lacked some of the finer feelings. He combined a deep personal sympathy for anything which he could visualize with a rather strange mental obtuseness toward things remote or abstract. Darwin, who was born in the same year, had an early love of poetry and music. How these tastes became atrophied in his concentration of thought upon matters relating to the natural sciences was confessed and mourned by him, and has often been commented upon by others. The time came to him when music and poetry gave him physical nausea. Lincoln never had an appreciation or love of anything very fine either in poetry or music. At a time when he was being considered for President he could sit in a stage coach playing "Yankee Doodle" on the mouth-organ[55] and playing it badly, but he had no fine musical or poetic taste.

Not long before his assassination his sister-in-law, Mrs. Edwards, visited at the White House, and he accompanied her one evening to the conservatory. She greatly admired the rare exotics which she there beheld for the first time, and Lincoln vainly strove to share her enthusiasm but confessed to her that something had been left out of his nature. Such things seemed to make no appeal to him.

Of Lincoln's lack in matters involving the finer feelings we have abundant testimony not only in the pages of Lamon and Herndon, but in other intimate sketches of his life in Illinois, as, for example, in Whitney's *With Lincoln on the Circuit*,[56] and especially in his article in the *Arena* in April, 1898.

There were aspects of religion which did not make as strong an appeal to Abraham Lincoln as they would have made but for this blind spot in his nature.

It is not the purpose of this book to go in any detail into Mr. Lincoln's love affairs; but if any further illustration were desired of this point of which we are speaking, it could be found very painfully in his relations with Miss Owens, and his letter to Mrs. Browning.

Reference has been made to a certain lack of good taste which Lincoln sometimes manifested, and of which the reminiscences of Lamon, Herndon, Whitney, and others of his associates have given us sufficient example. But it was not always so with Lincoln. There was in him an innate courtesy, an intuitive sympathy, an ability to adapt himself to another's point of view, which gave him the essential quality of a gentleman. Fred Douglass said of him that Mr. Lincoln was the only white man with whom he ever talked for an hour who did not in some way remind him that he was a negro. That same fine feeling showed itself in many ways.

It should be remembered, too, when his uncouthness of apparel is recalled, that while he was always a careless man in his dress, the period in which he lived was one in which people of the regions where he formed his lifelong habits were not given to fastidious dress. He dressed much as other men dressed. The shawl which he wore was such a shawl as the author's father wore; such as many men wore. It was a mark of good breeding rather than the reverse, and some men wore the shawl very effectively for purposes of display. The author himself has often carried with him in long rides in the southern mountains what was called a "saddle-

shawl" not unlike that of Lincoln; and he now owns such a shawl, bequeathed to him by one of Lincoln's contemporaries, and of the same color and approximately the same size that Lincoln used.

Mrs. Jane Martin Johns of Decatur, died recently at the age of ninety-two. Her mind was clear and her memory precise. She has left this, among other memories of Lincoln, as a reminder that he was a gentleman, and that at times he showed the finest discrimination and good taste:

> "When I first knew Mr. Lincoln, he was forty years old; had been a member of the state legislature and of congress; had traveled the circuit with men of culture and refinement; had met great statesmen and elegant gentlemen; and the ungainliness of the pioneer, if he ever had it, had worn off and his manner was that of a gentleman of the old school, unaffected, unostentatious, who arose at once when a lady entered the room, and whose courtly manners would put to shame the easy-going indifference to etiquette which marks the twentieth century gentleman.
>
> "His dress, like his manner, was suited to the occasion, but was evidently a subject to which he gave little thought. It was certainly unmarked by any notable peculiarity. It was the fashion of the day for men to wear large shawls and Mr. Lincoln's shawl, very large,

very soft, and very fine, is the only article of his dress that has left the faintest impression on my memory. He wore it folded lengthwise (three and one-half yards long) in scarf fashion over his shoulders, caught together under the chin with an immense safety-pin. One end of the shawl was thrown across his breast and over the shoulder, as he walked up the steps of the Macon House one day in December, 1849.

"Court was in session in Decatur, Judge David Davis presiding. The hotel, where I was living temporarily, was kept by David Krone and his good lady, whose popularity extended over the fourteen counties of the Eighth Judicial District.

"Court week was always anticipated with great interest by the people of the county seat. It was customary for the entire bar of the district to follow the court from county to county, every man either seeking new business, or as counsel in cases already on the docket. The date of their arrival at any particular county seat could not be definitely fixed, as the judge held court at his pleasure, usually trying to finish all the business ahead before he migrated to the next station.

"He was followed by a curious

crowd. Lawyers, clients, witnesses, itinerant peddlers, showmen, and gamblers filled the towns to overflowing. It was no unusual thing for men who had no business in the court, to follow from town to town merely seeking entertainment. Social events of any moment were wont to be arranged for court week, as the harvest time when strangers could be taken in. Taverns were crowded and the hospitality of the people was taxed to the utmost limit.

"To the men of the town, who always crowded the court house, the examination of witnesses and the speeches of the lawyers furnished an intellectual treat, for there were giants at that bar. There was David Davis, the companionable judge, who knew the law and who loved a laugh. And there were Stephen Logan the scholarly, and Stuart the shrewd and kindly, Swett the clever, and Browning the handsome, and Lamon the amusing, and Weldon and Gridley and Parks and Harmon and Ficklin and Linder and Whitney and Oliver L. Davis, and the best beloved Abraham Lincoln. Some of them traveled to only two or three counties, but Judge Davis, Mr. Lincoln and Leonard Swett went the whole circuit; Davis because he had to, Lincoln because he loved it, and Swett because he loved their

company.

"The Macon House was an oasis in the wilderness of miserable inns at which they were usually compelled to 'put in.' In Decatur they found clean beds, good bread and an abundance of the good things of the season, administered by a genial landlady who greeted them all as friends.

"It was in court week that my piano, after a long journey by steamer down the Ohio and up the Wabash to Crawfordsville, Ind., and thence by wagon, arrived in Decatur. The wagon was backed up to the steps at the front door of the Macon House and the question of how to unload it and get it into the house was a puzzling one. Not a man except the landlord was to be found, but he soon solved the problem. "Court will soon adjourn and there will be plenty of men," and almost as he spoke the crowd began to appear. They gathered curiously around the wagon that blocked the entrance. Landlord Krone explained:

"'There is a piano in that box that this woman here wants someone to help unload. Who will lend a hand?'

"A tall gentleman stepped forward and, throwing off a big gray Scotch shawl, exclaimed, 'Come on, Swett, you are the next biggest man.'

"That was my first meeting with Abraham Lincoln.

"After a few moments' consultation with the driver of the wagon, Mr. Lincoln went into the basement where Mr. Krone had a carpenter shop, and returned with two heavy timbers across his shoulders. With them he established communication between the wagon and the front door steps. The piano was unloaded with the assistance of Mr. Linder and Mr. Swett, amid jokes and jeers galore, most of the jeers coming from little Judge Logan.

"Before the legs had been screwed into place, dinner was announced, and the men hurried to the back porch where two tin wash basins, a long roller towel and a coarse comb, fastened to the wall by a long string, afforded toilet accommodations for all guests. When dinner was served, 'Mother Krone' placed a roast of beef in front of Dr. Trowbridge to be carved and exclaimed, 'Men, if you can't get your teeth through this beef you will have to fall back on the sausage. I agreed to try roasting it without parboiling it, and I am afraid it will be tougher than it was yesterday, and that was bad enough.'

"The beef, however, proved to be tender and juicy and was highly praised by the guests. I recall this

incident because Mr. Lincoln once reminded me of it, saying that 'that was the time he learned that roast beef ought not to be boiled.'

"After dinner, Mr. Lincoln superintended the setting up of the piano, even to seeing that it stood squarely in the center of the wall space allotted it, and then received my thanks with a polite bow and asked: 'Are you expecting to follow the court and give concerts?' The immense relief expressed on his countenance, when he was assured that he would not be called upon to repeat the performance was very laughable.

""Then may we have one tune before we go?' he asked, and I played 'Rosin the Bow,' with variations.

"Someone shouted, 'Come on, boys, the judge will be waiting,' and after I had assured them that if they desired it, I would give my 'first and only concert on this circuit' when they returned to the hotel in the evening, the crowd dispersed.

"Here I wish to note that in the crowd that had assembled to watch the unloading of the piano, the members of the bar, Mr. Lincoln's friends and equals, always addressed him as 'Mr. Lincoln,' while to the rabble and hangers-on he was often 'Abe.'

"The piano was a 'Gilbert,' made in Boston, and its fame extended far and wide. It was visited by people from all over the state, stage coach passengers frequently 'holding the stage' while they went down to the other tavern (the Harrell House was the stage office) to see and hear the novel instrument.

"That evening a notable crowd assembled in the parlor of the Macon House. Judge Davis, who did not put up with Landlord Krone but was the guest of Mrs. A. A. Powers, came in after supper; and practically all of the bar of the Eighth Judicial District was present at what I suppose we would now call a recital. I found that Mr. Charles Brown, a wealthy landowner and stock dealer of McLean County, not only sang but played a little and I called on him for assistance.

"The program, as I remember it, will illustrate the style of music in vogue at that period.

"For show pieces, I played the 'Battle of Prague' and the 'Carnival of Venice,' then followed with 'Washington's March,' 'Come Haste to the Wedding,' and 'Woodup Quick Step' to convince the audience that I did know a tune or two. For tragedy, I sang Henry Russel's 'Maniac' and 'The Ship on Fire,' and then made

> their blood run cold with the wild wail of the 'Irish Mother's Lament.' For comic, we sang 'The Widdy McGee' and 'I Won't Be a Nun,' topping off with 'Old Dan Tucker,' 'Lucy Long,' and 'Jim Crow,' the crowd joining in the chorus. These were followed by more serious music. Mr. Brown and Mr. Swett joined me in the duet 'Moonlight, Music, Love, and Flowers,' 'Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep,' 'Pilgrim Fathers,' 'Bonaparte's Grave,' and 'Kathleen Mavourneen.' Each and all met with applause.
>
> "As a finale, I sang 'He Doeth All Things Well,' after which Mr. Lincoln, in a very grave manner, thanked me for the evening's entertainment, and said: 'Don't let us spoil that song by any other music tonight.' Many times afterwards I sang that song for Mr. Lincoln and for Governor Oglesby, with whom it was also a favorite."

Another limitation must be found in Lincoln's morbid cautiousness. Herndon tells us that his very walk gave the impression of craftiness; that it was not the product of deceit, but only of a caution so excessive that it became something more than second nature. He was secretive to a marked degree. When he seemed to be confidential it was in minor matters, or matters on which he had already made up his mind and intended soon to make a public statement. Whatever may be the true story of his engagement to

Mary Todd and of those stormy and obscure months between "that fatal first of January, 1840," and the date of their wedding, November 4, 1842, Lincoln's letters to Speed show an excess of caution that was positively abnormal. That it was a mark of insanity has been vigorously denied and with much apparent reason; but if it was not the mark of acute mental aberration, it was the manifestation of a permanent mental trait. Such a nature, which debated like Hamlet the question of suicide and actually printed a brief article which was later cut from the files of the Springfield paper—probably by Lincoln himself—which lingered shivering on the brink of matrimony like the "timorous mortal" of whom Lincoln was taught to sing, must have hesitated long before coming to such a confident poise between alternating faith and doubt as that he could have stood before the altar of a Presbyterian church in Springfield or in Washington and taken upon him the vows of church membership.

Different writers have attempted to account for Lincoln's failure to affiliate with the church wholly on the basis of his being greater than the churches. I quote from one of these characteristic addresses, and one that is in many respects excellent:

> "Perhaps his religious nature was so broad that it could not be compassed within the limits of any particular creed or system of doctrines. Perhaps he saw the soul of truth so clearly that he could not accept any one of them as a complete and final revelation of truth. Perhaps he so clearly realized that all religious creeds and systems have their roots

> in human nature that he could look upon the Christian system as the only deposit of truth committed to the children of men. Perhaps his conception of Deity was so vast that he could not see all the Divine attributes manifest in the historic Christ. Perhaps he felt that some of the doctrines of Christianity, as they were formulated and preached in his day, would be a hindrance rather than a help to his religious faith, so clear was his vision of the things which are unseen and eternal, and so close was his relation to the Author of his being. Perhaps he felt no need of a daysman or mediator, because he himself knew the Lord face to face."—MILTON R. SCOTT: *Lincoln, Was He an Inspired Prophet?*, pp. 55-57.

There is a measure of truth in this presentation of one side of the case, but it is not the whole truth. Lincoln did not possess this supposed clarity of vision of all spiritual truth. Some things he saw clearly, but his faith and vision had each of them marked and undeniable limitations.

In his widely popular and in many respects excellent oration on Lincoln, Bishop Fowler said:

> "Let us analyze Mr. Lincoln if we are able. This task is difficult on account of his symmetry. He was so much like a sphere that he projected farthest in every direction. His

> comprehension is to us impossible on account of his immensity, for a man can be comprehended only by his peers" (p. 28).

He found the same difficulty in estimating Grant. "It is difficult to analyze General Grant, because he is so simple and complete. Like Lincoln, he is like a sphere; approached from any side he seems to project farthest toward you. Try to divide, and each section is like all the rest. Cut him through, and he is all the way through alike" (p. 127).

I do not think that this is correct concerning Grant, and it certainly is not true concerning Lincoln. He was not a sphere; he was angular or he was nothing. [57] In endeavoring to assess his religious convictions, we are liable to encounter contradictions. But there is a certain inconsistent consistency in those contradictions. There are certain kinds of contradictions which we do not encounter, and certain which, encountering, may be interpreted in the light of certain underlying agreements.

For instance, the Calvinism which he inherited and heard through his childhood and which he accepted in a kind of semi-fatalistic philosophy might seem the reverse of scientific. But the natural science which Lincoln learned from *Vestiges of Creation*, while it would have been repudiated by every Baptist preacher whom Lincoln ever heard in his youth, was capable of being grafted upon that very root.

I suggest one more limitation in the character of Abraham Lincoln, which had its possible relation to his hypothetical church membership. He was possessed in marked degree of the obstinacy of irresolution. That genial good-nature of his had

behind it stubbornness, irony, and a sullen but mighty temper which rarely broke the bounds of self-control, but sometimes manifested itself on very slight provocation. Just when men thought they had discovered in Abraham Lincoln a nose of wax which they could shape to their own liking, they encountered in him a wholly unexpected element of passive inertia and of active obstinacy. When he did not know what to do, he would not do anything. It was this quality in him which enabled him to rule a rampant Cabinet and which justified the qualities set forth in such books as Major Putnam's *Abraham Lincoln the Leader*, Richard Watson Gilder's *Lincoln the Leader*, and Alonzo Rothschild's *Lincoln, Master of Men*. It was this which enabled Herndon to write of him: "I know Abraham Lincoln better than he knows himself.... You and I must keep the people right; God will keep Lincoln right."

Those do greatly err who see in Lincoln only genial good humor and teachableness; there was a point at which his good humor became withering scorn or towering passion and his gentle and tractable disposition became adamantine inertia. His successor, Andrew Johnson, quoted as characterizing himself the lines from Sir Walter Scott:

Come one, come all; this rock shall fly

From its firm base as soon as I."

Lincoln might with much more appropriateness have quoted it of himself.

Mary Todd Lincoln united with the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield on April 13, 1852, upon profession of her faith. The church records contain no record of her dismissal, but only the word

"Deceased" without a date. She remained a member until her death, though, after her return to Springfield in an unhappy state of mind, she was not a very active one. The only other Lincoln record on the books of this church is the baptism of Thomas Lincoln—"Tad," "son of Abraham and Mary"—on April 4, 1855. The records of the financial secretary, not very complete, show Abraham Lincoln to have been a pew-holder from 1852 to 1861, and he departed for Washington with his pew rent paid to the date of his departure. This is all that is to be learned from the church records in Springfield.

Mary Todd Lincoln was a member in good and regular standing of the Episcopal Church when she united with the Presbyterian, but she united on profession of her faith. She affirmed that she did not believe that she had ever previously been converted. This statement is one of several indications that she, and with her her husband, came into a new religious experience after the death of Willie in Washington, as earlier he had been profoundly impressed after the death of Eddie in Springfield.

We learn through sources outside the records, but wholly credible sources, that her uniting with the Presbyterian Church was preceded by a revival in the church, and she and her husband attended the revival meetings regularly. Not only so, but many of Lincoln's associates, including Major Stuart and other influential men of Springfield, were present almost every night and were deeply interested. The letter of Thomas Lewis, already cited, refers to the general expectation that Lincoln would have united with the church with his wife. A similar and wholly independent report comes to us[58] from Lincoln's associates outside the church. They, also, expected

him to go in with his wife. But Lincoln was not fully persuaded. The logic of Dr. Smith demolished all the arguments of the infidels and did it over again:

"And thrice he vanquished all his foes,

And thrice he slew the slain."

But doubts, though logically answered, still rose in Lincoln's mind. On the other hand, and more important, Lincoln did not find himself able to accept the rigid Calvinism of the Presbyterian Church of that day. The evangelist made strong appeals, and Lincoln was not unmoved. But he said to his friends that "he couldn't quite see it."

Lincoln was a man of mighty courage when his convictions were assured. But he was also a man of more than normal caution. He could meet an issue which he was fully convinced was right with all needful heroism. But he was capable of evading an issue about which he was uncertain.

We know what Lincoln did just after his State Fair speech in Springfield on October 3, 1854. He was roused "as never before," to quote his own words, by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, and he came out in a four hours' speech following Douglas, and committed himself unqualifiedly to the anti-Nebraska program. The Abolitionists were overjoyed, and Lovejoy wanted him to address that body that very night. Lincoln was in a quandary. To offend the Abolitionists meant political death, for they were now strong and growing stronger; but, on the other hand, to become an Abolitionist meant political death also at that stage of the fight. Herndon, who was himself an Abolitionist, and not much given to

compromise, fully realized that Lincoln was in grave political danger.[59] With Herndon's approval, Lincoln took Bob in his buggy and drove off out into the country till the crisis was over.[60]

We know something also, though probably not the whole truth, about Lincoln's wavering indecision with respect to his marriage to Mary Todd. Whether he ran away from his own wedding, as he ran away from the offer of the leadership of the Abolition movement, and if so, whether he was sane or insane at the time, are questions which I prefer not, at this time, to undertake to answer. But that incident may be cited as another reminder that Lincoln had times of great mental uncertainty, and that at such times he sometimes did unexpected things.

It is my firm conviction that, after the death of Eddie, Lincoln was profoundly stirred in his own spiritual life; that the arguments of Dr. Smith went far toward answering the arguments of Paine, Volney, and his freethinking friends; that bereavement and spiritual comfort had done their work of grace; that the desire for a home more truly united in its religious relations and spiritual sympathies made a strong appeal to him; and that the atmosphere of the revival seemed to make it easy and natural for him to enter the church with Mrs. Lincoln. But, though a Calvinist in his early training, he was not ready to accept Calvinism as a complete and articulated system as presented in the Westminster Confession and in the preaching of Dr. Smith.

He wavered. Whether he left town to avoid pressure to attend the meeting of the Session at which his wife made her application for church membership, we do not know. It is not improbable. Certainly if his

absence had been unavoidable he could have joined at the next opportunity. I think that he did not join because he was still in some measure of intellectual uncertainty with reference to doctrinal matters. I am only sorry that someone did not tell him that these were no sufficient reasons for his declining to unite with the church.

It would be possible to carry this study further, but it is not necessary. An explanation of Lincoln's failure to unite with a Christian church in that time of bitter sectarianism when to have joined one church would have made him a target for criticism from others and when his mind was intent rather upon the application of his Christian principles than the proclamation of his religious opinions, is partly to be attributed to the faults of the churches; but a portion of the explanation is to be found also in qualities inherent in the life of Abraham Lincoln.

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CHAPTER XXII

THE CONSTRUCTIVE ARGUMENT

We are ready now to undertake the difficult task of determining with some approach to certainty the essential content and character of Abraham Lincoln's religious belief.

We must not be surprised if we find ourselves unable to construct a perfectly symmetrical and consistent confession of faith. The material is much more abundant and explicit and much better attested in some departments than in others. Not only so, but we must never forget the mighty elements of contradiction in Lincoln's personality.

Mediocre men have this in their favor, that it is relatively easy to classify them. Not only may they be readily assigned to their several occupations, and conveniently pigeon-holed as butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers, but it is a comparatively simple task to group them under single adjectives, as good and bad, black and white, tall and short, fat and lean, old and young, intelligent and stupid. The process is less easy with really great men. There is always an admirable element of human inconsistency in men of large mold which would be intolerable in lesser personalities. It has been truly said that no man becomes really great and influential who is not a good subject for caricature. The sublime is own sister to the ridiculous. Genius is next akin to insanity. The men who do really great things are a perpetual puzzle to those who possess only

commonplace standards of classification. A commonplace villain is a villain, first, last, and all the time; but a villain like Milton's Satan, Napoleon, or the late German Kaiser is so great a villain as to be half a hero. The two hundred seventy-six dripping men who struggled through the surf at Malta one stormy morning rather more than eighteen hundred years ago and gathered shivering round the fire, were quickly classified, for the most part, into four convenient companies, of sailors, soldiers, passengers, and prisoners; but when one of them shook off a viper into the fire and showed no sign of hurt, it was quite certain that he was either a murderer or a god. Opinions might differ and did differ as to which of the two extremes might properly be claimed for him, but no one proposed to find a place for him in middle ground.

The strength of great men lies in their possession and their counterpoise of opposing qualities. Over against the monotonous uniformity, the stupid consistency, of those common people whom Lincoln said God must love because He made so many of them, this quality displays itself as a peculiar possession of genius. Now and then it is given to a great man sufficiently so to subordinate the inconsistencies without which real greatness could not exist as to incarnate some outstanding principle of which he becomes the exponent. Abraham Lincoln did this; and the world, or that small part of the world which can lay claim to any considerable measure of moral discernment, has redefined its conception of certain high qualities, its measure of the moral significance of certain notable achievements, in terms of his personality. This process is highly desirable as well as inevitable; but the elements of inconsistency are not thereby removed from the character itself. Of

him we might say:

"*His life was gentle, and the elements*

So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up,

And say to all the world: This was a man!"

—Julius Caesar, V, 5.

It has often been affirmed that "'Lincoln knew his Bible better than any minister," and large claims have been made concerning his use of it in public addresses. Mr. Lincoln did know and use the Bible, and his style is saturated with it; but it would be easy to exaggerate both his knowledge and use of it.

Prof. Daniel Kilham Dodge of the University of Illinois examined twenty-five of Lincoln's extended and carefully prepared addresses with this result:[61]

In five speeches from 1839 to 1852 he found six Biblical quotations, of which four were in his temperance address.

In his reply to Douglas in 1852 there were two Biblical quotations, both from the Old Testament.

In 1856 he found one, and that most notable of all—the "house divided against itself."

In his "lost speech" at Bloomington, as recorded by Whitney, there were six Biblical quotations, four from the Old Testament and two from the New—the largest number in any single speech.

In his ten speeches in the Lincoln and Douglas debates there were two Biblical references, besides a number of allusions to the "house divided against

itself."

There were no Biblical quotations in the Cooper Union address or in the First Inaugural or in the Gettysburg address; none in the two messages to Congress in 1861.

His Second Inaugural was itself a kind of leaf out of the books of the prophets.

In the whole of the twenty-five speeches, there were found twenty-two Biblical references, eight in the Old Testament and fourteen in the New. This notwithstanding the impression of many who knew him that Lincoln preferred the Old Testament to the New, as recorded by Noah Brooks.

But this rather meager use of direct quotations and allusions need not disappoint us. Nor does it militate against the essentially Biblical substratum of his style. When we come to the study of Lincoln's literary and oratorical method, we find more striking contradictions and evolutions than we have here. Lincoln's oratory was not of the same style at all periods of his career, nor were his methods uniform at any one period.

He was a ready stump-speaker, yet he became so cautious while in the White House that he was timid about responding even to a serenade without having first written out his address, and on occasion could appear rude in declining to utter even a simple word of greeting and appreciation, as on the night before his address in Gettysburg, when he was very abrupt to the company that serenaded him.

He had been accustomed to large use of gesture, swinging his great arms, and sometimes, even in the Douglas debates, bending his knees till they almost

touched the platform, and then rising suddenly almost with a whoop, but he became very quiet and self-restrained in his oratory.

He is alleged to have loved Burns more than any other poet, yet his speeches have been searched in vain for a single quotation from Burns. It is said that next to Burns he loved Byron, and he is not known ever to have quoted Byron in any speech or paper. It is said that his favorite Shakspeare play was *Richard III.*, but his Shakspeare quotations are from *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Macbeth*, the *Merchant of Venice*; and there is one allusion to Falstaff.

Besides Shakspeare, whom he quoted next to the Bible, his literary allusions are to T. H. Bayley, Dickens, Robert Herrick, Pope and Scott, and they are not numerous. The total number of his quotations, as listed by Professor Dodge, including Shakspeare, but not including the Bible, is thirty.

What is more surprising, Lincoln was known as a great story teller. But his addresses contain hardly a single anecdote. He told stories in jury trials and to illustrate points in conversation, but he rarely told them in his addresses.[62]

No man who knew Lincoln intimately studied him so long, so industriously, or, in spite of many limitations, so appreciatively, as William H. Herndon. He was a profound believer in the mental and spiritual evolution of Lincoln.

In 1887, while Herndon, after many years of interruption, began again the preparation of his *Life of Lincoln*, he had an extended correspondence, partly from Springfield, and partly from Greencastle, Indiana, where Mr. Jesse W. Weik was at work with him on his book, and with a Boston sculptor, Mr.

Truman H. Bartlett, who was planning a statue of Lincoln. Herndon's letters went more and more into detail as the correspondence proceeded, and he gave in some respects the very best affirmation of the development of Lincoln on the higher side of his nature that Herndon wrote at any time.

Herndon seemed to have some apprehension that a study of photographs and life-masks and other evidences of the physical appearance of Lincoln would not reveal the man himself. He said that a person studying his physical nature would say "that his physical nature was low, coarse, and not high and fine." Before he sent this letter he re-read it, and inserted the word "comparatively" before "low." Mr. Bartlett asked him further about this, and Herndon went into detail as to Lincoln's body. "His blood ran slowly. He was of a low or slow mechanical power, within him. I did not intend to say that Lincoln's organization was a low, animal organization. What I meant to say was that it was a slow-working machine. Lincoln's flesh was coarse, pimply, dry, hard, harsh; color of his flesh saffron brown; no blood seemingly in it; flesh wrinkled."

Mr. Bartlett apparently inquired whether the abnormal qualities of frontier life produced these effects, and whether Herndon had known other men of the Lincoln type. Apparently he alluded to the presence of malaria and the large use of pork in frontier diet.

Herndon did not accept the pork and malaria theories. He said that all such theories must give way to facts, and he dealt with facts. The men of the frontier had the best meat in the world, "venison, bear, turkey, and of course some hog."

> "You ask me if I ever saw in this great wild west many men of Lincoln's type, and to which I answer, Yes. The first settlers of central and southern Illinois were men of that type. They came from the limestone regions of Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee, and were men of giant strength, physical force, and by nature mentally strong. They were original, were individualists. The strong alone from 1818 to 1830 could get here, and the strong alone could survive here.... No one was like Lincoln, and yet many were of his type.... He was, as you say, 'a man of extraordinary contrasts.' You would not look for a well-rounded man in such a description."

Lincoln was, then, as Herndon saw him, and as the world must see him, a legitimate product of his environment. Herndon had read Buckle and Spencer and Darwin, and was a thoroughgoing believer in evolution, as was Lincoln, from a far narrower reading, but a very thoughtful study of *Vestiges of Creation*.

Physically, Lincoln was akin to the strong pioneers of early Illinois, and it was not difficult to find each several trait of Lincoln reduplicated in many of them. But Lincoln himself was never duplicated. He was a product of his environment, but he was also an evolution which in terms of an individual personality went beyond environment, and was still going forward when death came to him.

This evolution of Lincoln, the spiritual Lincoln, as portrayed in these letters to a sculptor, who must not be permitted to forget, if he was in danger of forgetting, that the real man Lincoln had in him more than his bodily measurements could portray, is one of the most suggestive studies disclosed by Herndon, and it is sound, both as approached from the standpoint of science, and as considered in the personal study of Lincoln in his growth from year to year.

Like St. Paul, Lincoln had a warfare in his members. He was an embodiment of forces mutually antagonistic. He would not have been the man he was had either of them been lacking, and the growth of either at the total expense of the other would have given us a man abnormal, which Mr. Lincoln came perilously near to being. But his real development was mental and spiritual.

In another place St. Paul says that "The first man is of the earth, earthy, and the second man is from heaven." It has been assumed without due warrant that what he had in mind was a contrast between Adam and Christ, and this view is strengthened by the intrusion of the words "the Lord" in the authorized English text. But it is quite possible that St. Paul, even if Adam and Christ were a part of his contrast, had really in mind the evolution of any man's life; he being himself in his bodily nature the first man and in the birth and growth of his higher nature the second and contrasting man. "First is that which is natural, and after, that which is spiritual."

This was Herndon's thought of Lincoln, as disclosed in these letters,[63] and it is true of Lincoln. Lincoln was more than an embodiment of contrasts; the solar system is that, and it is more. In the solar system the

opposing forces do not neutralize each other, but together hold the earth and planets in their orbits. So it was with Lincoln. But with him the higher and nobler forces became increasingly dominant.

Herndon resented it when anyone said that Lincoln had died at the right time. He believed that, great as Lincoln was, his nobler qualities had not yet come to their full maturity, and that a longer-lived Lincoln would have been an even nobler Lincoln. Here are some of the things he says of him in these letters:

> "I said to you once that Mr. Lincoln had not arrived at maturity in 1865, and I say so now. His blood ran slowly—had low or slow circulation and consequently a slow build-up. As he had a slow build-up, so he had a slow development; he grew up like the forest oak, tough, solid, knotty, gnarled, standing out with power against the storm, and almost defying the lightning. Hence I conclude that he had not arrived at his highest development in 1865.... The convolutions of his brain were long; they did not snap off quickly like a short, thick man's brain.... The enduring power of Mr. Lincoln's thought and brain was wonderful. He could sit and think without food or rest longer than any man I ever saw."

He goes into detail concerning Mr. Lincoln's bodily lethargy and its effect on body and mind, the sluggishness of all his functions, and affirms that this

must be taken into account in any right estimate of the man; but that steadily, and the more surely because slowly, his mind and soul developed and became more and more dominant.

> "His flesh looked dry and leathery, tough and everlasting; his eyes were small and gray; head small and forehead receding; but when this great man was moved by some great and good feeling, by some idea of Liberty, or Justice, or Right, then he seemed an inspired man. It was just then that Lincoln's nature was beautiful, and in complete harmony with the laws of the Great Eternal. I have seen him in this inspired condition, and thought he was molded in the Spirit's best mold. Lincoln was a great man, a good man, and a pure man; and beneath his rough bodily exterior, Nature wove her fine network of nerve.... Lincoln was a gloomy man at one moment and a joyous man the next; he was conscious that a terrible fate awaited him. He said to me, 'I cannot help but believe that I shall meet with some terrible end.' This idea seized him and made him gloomy. At times his better nature would get the mastery of him, and he would be happy till the shadow of his fate flitted before him. In philosophy Lincoln was a fatalist.... In my poor opinion, Lincoln had not

> arrived, when he was assassinated, at the meridian of his intellectual power.... Were you to read his early speeches thoroughly you would see his then coarse nature. He gradually rose up, more spiritualistic. This is one of the reasons why I say that Lincoln was not fully developed in mind at the last. When a great Boston man said, 'Lincoln died at the right time,' he did not know what he was talking about."

In these and like paragraphs Herndon testified to the mental and spiritual evolution of Lincoln; and he was probably correct when he opined that that evolution was still in process, and that Lincoln was, up to the very hour of his death, a growing man in all that meant most to America and the world.

The religion of Abraham Lincoln was part and parcel of his life; and his life was an evolution whose successive stages can be measured with reasonable certainty. Not only did his religious convictions develop and broaden under the stimuli of Lincoln's constantly broadening intellectual and spiritual environment, but they broadened in the growth of his own personality.

There was an evolution in his apprehension of the ethical implications of public office. The Lincoln who re-entered politics after the repeal of the Missouri Compromise was a changed man from the Lincoln who, with the other members of the "Long Nine," earned by political log-rolling the severe but not wholly unmerited name applied to them by one of Illinois' best governors, "spared monuments of popular wrath." That Lincoln did not in this earlier

period commit any personally dishonorable act is not an argument against the theory here advocated. He had, in his later political career, a far higher ideal of political honor, a greatly nobler conception of the dignity of public office—which he always sought—as a field of popular service. His political career was an evolution, and it developed nobler characteristics than that which characterized his earlier political life.

Lincoln's emancipation policy was an evolution. The successive stages of that policy were worthily set forth by Paul Selby in an address before the Historical Society of Chicago.[64] There never was a time when Abraham Lincoln did not believe slavery to be wrong, but there was a time when he was not an Abolitionist. The moral aspect of the slavery question grew in his mind and conscience till he promised his God to free the slaves.

On Sunday evening, September 7, 1862, a public meeting was held in Bryan Hall, Chicago, to urge upon the President the desire of Christian people that he should free the slaves. A petition was circulated, and was signed by all the Congregational and nearly all the Methodist and Baptist ministers of that city, courteously requesting the President to give the matter his earnest attention. The petition was sent to Washington by the hand of Rev. William W. Patton and Rev. John Dempster, who met the President by appointment on Saturday afternoon, September 13, the interview being arranged by Hon. Gideon Welles.

The story of that meeting has often been told in part, with undue emphasis upon Mr. Lincoln's statement then made that if God had a message for him on this subject He would be more likely to communicate it directly to Mr. Lincoln than to others for him. The

latest book to misuse this incident is one just from the press in Great Britain, the *Short Life of Lincoln*, by Hon. Ralph Shirley, who says:

> "Some of the ministers in this deputation even went so far as to assure him that they had authority in God's name to command him to emancipate the slaves."

Inasmuch as there were but two of the ministers, and neither of them assumed any such authority to speak the mind of God, such statements ought to cease, especially as the true story, from which all these accounts are garbled, is available for inspection in the files of the Maryland Historical Society.

Mr. Lincoln did say to them that he hoped it would not appear irreverent in him to say that if God were to reveal this duty of his to others, it was probable that He would reveal it also directly to Mr. Lincoln. At the beginning of the interview he was guarded; but as he found common ground with his visitors, he threw first one leg and then the other over the arm of his chair, and talked to them with the utmost freedom, and asked them concerning the opinion of ministers and churches, and assured them that he desired to know the will of God, and whatever seemed to him to be God's will he would do.

The next week occurred the battle of Antietam, and on Saturday, September 20, exactly a week after his interview with the Chicago ministers, Mr. Lincoln called the Cabinet together and read to them the Emancipation Proclamation, which was signed and published on the following Monday. We know now that Lincoln had promised God that if that battle resulted in the success of the Union cause he would

issue the proclamation. We also know that the meeting with the Chicago ministers was very timely, and gave him an added assurance of moral support from the churches, if not added confidence in the help of God.

Some time after, Joseph Medill, editor of the Chicago *Tribune*, returning from Washington, said, "Secretary Stanton told me to say to those Chicago clergymen who waited on the President about the Proclamation of Emancipation, that their interview finished the business. After that there was no manifestation of doubt or talk of delay. Mr. Lincoln's mind was fully made up."—*Proceedings of the Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore*, 1888.

Lincoln's literary style was an evolution.[65] His spread-eagle stump-speeches, with their florid rhetoric and grandiloquent figures of speech evolved into the calm, dignified, and forceful English of his maturer years.[66] An able monograph in which this evolution is traced is cited elsewhere in this volume. [67] That change of style was the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual as well as intellectual grace.

In like manner Lincoln's religion was an evolution, both in its intellectual and its spiritual qualities. Up to the time of his residence in New Salem he had heard only the dogmatic sectarianism of unlettered preachers, proclaiming a creed which furnished him certain lifelong tenets but which as a whole he could not accept. At New Salem he read the negative arguments which confuted the dogmas he had heard, and perhaps unwittingly made room for a more intelligent faith.

He was deeply impressed by the argument of Dr. Smith in his *The Christian's Defence*. It was the first

time he had heard the Christian apologetic rationally presented, and it made a lasting impression upon him without, however, fully satisfying him. He was, however, a much more religious man when he left Springfield than he was when he came to it, whether he knew it or not.

The solemn responsibilities of his office, the daily contemplation of death as it menaced him and came into the homes of the people of his country, the profound conviction that God was working His infinite purpose through the war, and through the human agency of Lincoln himself, took hold of the deepest impulses of his nature, and became the controlling forces of his policy.

Lincoln was no theologian, but I do not find any authority for the statement of Mr. Binns that Lincoln said, "the more a man knew of theology, the farther he got away from the Spirit of Christ." It is possible, of course, for a man to learn theology as an intellectual system and to have little religion as a spiritual experience, and to lose that little in the process of his logical subtleties: but Lincoln was too just a man to make so sweeping and unjust an affirmation of something of which he would certainly have admitted he knew very little.

The rock-bottom foundation of Abraham Lincoln's religious faith was the ultra-Calvinism of his boyhood. He was reared a Predestinarian Baptist; and while he never became a Baptist he never ceased to be a Predestinarian. To this he added a strong rationalistic tendency, inherent in his nature, and strengthened by his study of Paine and Volney. This also he never wholly outgrew. As a lawyer who was not well read, pleading before juries that cared little for the letter of the law, he was accustomed to

reduce his cases to simple principles of elementary justice, and to rest all upon these principles. This habit of thought and practice he applied also to his theology. His early recollection of the epitaph of Johnny Kongapod was nothing less than the application of the Golden Rule to theology—the assurance of an eternal justice throned in heaven and intelligible on earth.

Thus, when he argued in favor of universal salvation he did it upon the basis of the old Calvinistic theology with which he had been familiar all his life. If God was, indeed, absolute sovereign, and as good as He was great, and willed not that any should perish, then no one could finally perish. Universal salvation became logically and ethically compulsory. The Christ who tasted death for every man, did so as the necessary means to the efficiency of a plan of salvation whereby the curse of the fall was fully offset by the sacrifice of Christ, at the instance of the sovereign will of God. As in Adam all died, even so in Christ were all made alive. His theory of universal salvation was the logical expression of his determinism, influenced by his rationalism and confirmed by his appeal to a justice that would not accept a fall more universal than the atonement of Christ. This was not because Lincoln approached the theme from the direction of the grace of Christ, but of the irresistibility of a divine decree. He profoundly believed himself an instrument of the divine will, believing that will to be right, and creation's final law.

If it were asked, where in such a system as his he found a place for the forgiveness of sins, the answer would be first that he had no system, and secondly that he found no place for the doctrine; but it would

then be necessary to add that he found the doctrine, nevertheless. He had no system. He thought without logical method. But his thinking was in right lines. He followed simple paths, "blazed" through technicalities and in quite thorough disregard of them. As his office desk was in confusion, and he kept a package marked, "When you don't find it anywhere else, look here," so he had in his thinking a parcel of unassorted first principles to which he recurred when he needed them. Forgiveness and law were to him two unreconciled postulates; but law he had to assume, even though he denied forgiveness. But if he did not admit belief in forgiveness, he did believe in mercy, for he himself was merciful, and he believed that he would be merciful to God if he were God and God were man. Stanton could argue him down as to the necessity for shooting a soldier who slept on duty, but Lincoln injected an intuitive, and from Stanton's point of view, an unreasonable and a certainly unarticulated, element of mercy that forbade the killing of this particular boy.

His theory of governmental forgiveness was as irreconcilable with his theory of military discipline as his theory of divine mercy was with his system of inexorable law. He did not harmonize the contradictions: he was merciful, and let his system take the consequences, and he believed in a divine mercy while holding a theory with which the exercise of mercy was irreconcilable.

To such a mind as that of Abraham Lincoln, it was not necessary to prove the fact of immortality. If God possessed immortality and intended it for man, then God would make His decree effective in man. Adam's fall could not hopelessly lose to man what God designed; and, whether he accepted for himself or

not the theory of the fall and of redemption, he accepted both in meeting an argument which by reason of the fall could have deprived man of his birthright of immortality. He believed in the immortality of the soul.

Did he harmonize that doctrine with the rest of his creed? Probably not. He was no theologian, in the strict and formal sense, no logician. He reasoned on the basis of very simple and elementary principles, whose lines of direction were determined by the early Calvinistic preaching to which he listened, the rationalistic method which he learned from Paine, and his simple sense of justice and right.

His was not wholly an optimistic faith. He knew that man was sinful and sad and that "the spirit of mortal" had little occasion for pride; but he believed in an eternal justice and an unconquerable goodness, regnant above the perplexities and contradictions of this life, and triumphant in the life everlasting.

Abraham Lincoln believed in God. Save in his moments of deepest gloom when everything turned black, he appears never seriously to have questioned this fundamental article of belief. It is not easy to see how he could have done so. His idea of causation forbade it, and, what was more, his profound supernaturalism affirmed it as incontrovertible. This element of supernaturalism went the full length of orthodox preaching, as Lincoln heard it and accepted it. It was in accord with the teachings both of the Baptists, whom he heard in Indiana and rural Illinois, and the Presbyterians, to whom he listened in Springfield and in Washington. In a great God, a mighty Creator, a Sovereign Ruler, he was taught to believe by all the forms of Calvinism to which throughout his life he listened, and it was in full

essential accord with his own native tendency. His supernaturalism was not only ultra-orthodox; it went the full length of current superstition. The frontiersman of that day had superstition wrought into him by the vastness of the wilderness, the solemnity of the immeasurable forest and plain, and the insignificance of man; the haunting tales of savagery and witchcraft; the presence in every frontier community of some person supposed to be possessed of second sight or other supernatural qualities. The rationalism of his mature years modified but did not in any degree eradicate his supernaturalism.

It must be remembered that Paine and Volney, whose works he read, were far from being atheists. Thomas Paine, whatever he denied, believed as strongly as Peter Cartwright or James Smith in a personal God. So far as we know, Lincoln was never under any strong influence that might have made him an atheist, his doubts and questionings were all within the sphere of an expressed or implicit theism.

The names by which Lincoln referred to God are many and suggestive. The following is a partial list: [68]

Almighty, Almighty Architect, Almighty Arm, Almighty Father, Almighty God, Almighty Hand, Almighty Power, Almighty Ruler of Nations, Creator, Disposer, Divine Author, Divine Being, Divine Majesty, Divine Providence, Divine Will, Eternal God, Father, Father in Heaven, Father of Mercies, God, God Almighty, God of Battles, God of Hosts, God of Nations, Governor, Heavenly Father, Higher Being, Higher Power, Holy Spirit, Judge, Lord, Maker, Maker of the Universe, Master, Most High, Most High God, Omniscient Mind, Power,

Providence, Ruler of the Universe, Supreme Being.

Lincoln believed in the Bible. I am not sure that he accepted the whole content of the positive arguments set forth so cogently by his pastor, Dr. Smith. When he called this argument "unanswerable," it need not imply that his every doubt was satisfied, his every misgiving reassured. It is entirely possible that there lingered in his mind some vestiges of what he had read in writers opposed to the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures as it was then taught; indeed, that doctrine in the form in which it was currently stated was not one by which a modern man's orthodoxy ought to be tested. But he read the Bible, honored it, quoted it freely, and it became so much a part of him as visibly and permanently to give shape to his literary style and to his habits of thought. When Mrs. Speed presented him an Oxford Bible in 1841, he declared his intention to read it regularly, believing it to be "the best cure for the blues"; and he kept and loved and constantly used his mother's Bible. How he would have defined his theory of its transmission and of the relation of its divine and human elements we do not know, and we need not be too curious to inquire. It is more than possible that Mr. Lincoln never made this definition in his own mind. His attitude toward the Bible was a thoroughly practical one. We do not know that he ever heard Coleridge's pragmatic affirmation, but we have every reason to believe that he would have accepted it, namely, that he valued the Bible because "it finds me as no other book."

Concerning his opinion of Jesus Christ our material for constructive hypothesis is exceedingly scanty.[69] Herndon says he does not believe the name of Jesus can be found in any of Lincoln's authentic writings. I

have found it in his writings but I must confess that I have not found it frequently in any which I count to be certainly genuine.[70] There are, however, a number of references to Jesus Christ in his writings and published addresses, and they are both positive and reverent.

On July 4, 1864, the colored people of Baltimore presented him a beautiful copy of the Bible of the usual pulpit size, bound in violet-colored velvet. The corners were bands of solid gold and there was a thick plate of gold upon the cover, bearing this inscription:

> "To Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, the friend of universal freedom. From the loyal colored people of Baltimore, as a token of respect and gratitude. Baltimore, July 4, 1864."

In accepting this gift, which was presented in person by a committee of five, the President said:

> "In regard to this great book, I have only to say it is the best gift which God has ever given man. All the good from the Saviour of the world is communicated to us through this book."—CARPENTER: *Six Months in the White House*, p. 199; also NICOLAY and HAY: *Works of Lincoln*, twelve volume edition, X, 217-18.

Such references as this show to us the instinctive place which he accorded Jesus Christ in his own unpremeditated thinking. This was the best thing he

had to say about the Bible, that through it alone we have knowledge of the Saviour of the world.

Herndon tells us that Lincoln ridiculed the doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus. If this is true, I am very sorry. But Abraham Lincoln's faith in Christ did not depend wholly or even primarily upon his interpretation of the mystery of our Lord's birth. I approach a discussion of this question with some hesitation, for it is one which, as related to Lincoln we do not know very much about, but it is a subject which we are not free to pass over in silence.

It is a sad fact that the argument for the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ should ever have been based on the mystery of his birth. Not thus does the New Testament establish the doctrine of his divinity. The wonderful story of the birth of Jesus is told in two places only,—in the introduction to the two Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and these are the very two that contain genealogies tracing his descent through Joseph. The theory that one of these gives the family tree of Mary is unsupported by any evidence. So far as we know, Jesus never referred to the mystery of his birth, or attached any importance to it. His two brothers, James and Jude, each wrote a book which we have in the New Testament, and there is no reference in either of them to this doctrine. Peter preached his mighty sermons at Pentecost and afterwards, proclaiming the faith on which the Church was established, and he grounded his argument for the divinity of Jesus not upon his birth, but upon his resurrection from the dead. Paul preached the gospel of Christ throughout the Roman world, and neither in any recorded sermon nor in any letter did he make any reference to that dogma. Mark, earliest of the gospels, and for we know not

how long a period the only one, is silent as to the birth of Jesus; and John, the most definitely spiritual of them all, begins and concludes his profound philosophy of the person of Christ without a word concerning the manner of his birth.

It is, therefore, a wholly unwarranted dogmatism which grounds the divinity of Jesus in a question of the domestic relations of Joseph and Mary. Jesus Christ is to be accepted for what He was and is, not for some opinion as to how He became what He was.

We do not know whether Abraham Lincoln ever considered the question of the birth of Christ in any personal thought he may have had concerning his own birth. We may not forget, however, that if Herndon is right, Lincoln lived and died without knowing all the facts about his own mother which later research has made certain. The marriage certificate of his parents was recorded in another county than that in which he supposed it would have been recorded, and he appears never to have been certain that he himself was begotten in lawful wedlock. We know that Nancy Hanks and Thomas Lincoln were married a year before the birth of their eldest daughter, who was older than Abraham Lincoln, but he is believed not to have known that.

What then? Should a man in 1860 or 1864 refuse to vote for Abraham Lincoln because he did not feel certain when or whether his parents were married?

The man who said, "I believe in Abraham Lincoln," did not commonly have in mind any question of his parentage, but believed in his integrity, his patriotism, his moral leadership. Even so the man who believes in Jesus Christ may believe in Him without ever asking, much less ever answering, any dubitable question in metaphysics.

Scant as are the references to Jesus in the authentic utterances of Abraham Lincoln, they do not seem to me unimportant. They testify to a faith that was valid as far as it went. They manifest a spirit which is fundamentally Christian.

Unable to define his own views in terms that would have been acceptable to those who believed themselves the rightful guardians of orthodoxy in his day, it is not surprising that Lincoln was guarded in his references to a dogma which might have involved him in greater difficulties than he was prepared to meet. It was true in that day unhappily as it was in the days of Paul, "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good-will." It is occasion for profound sorrow that Christ has been so preached as that men have sometimes found it difficult to confess their faith in Him without provoking strife and envy.

That Lincoln was unwilling to make his doubt the occasion of dogmatic negation is evident from one or more of the acquaintances of Lincoln, whom Herndon interviewed in an effort to adduce testimony against his faith, and whom Lamon quoted in that part of his book in which he made his attack upon the religion of Lincoln. The following from I. W. Keys, the man who loaned to him *Vestiges of Creation*, is interesting in itself and especially interesting in its relation to the group of testimonies which these two men assembled:

> "In my intercourse with Mr. Lincoln, I learned that he believed in a Creator of all things, who had neither beginning nor end, and, possessing all power and wisdom, established a principle, in obedience

> to which worlds move, and are upheld, and animal and vegetable life come into existence. A reason he gave for his belief was that, in view of the order and harmony of all nature which we behold, it would have been created and arranged by some great thinking power. As to the Christian theory, that Christ is God, or equal to the Creator, he said that it had better be taken for granted; for, by the test of reason, we might become infidels on that subject, for evidence of Christ's divinity came to us in a somewhat doubtful shape; but that the system of Christianity was an ingenious one at least, and perhaps was calculated to do good."—LAMON: *Life of Lincoln*, p. 490.

Emphatic proof of Mr. Lincoln's faith is to be found in the positive declaration of the two men who have done most to destroy the world's confidence in it, Lamon and Herndon. In Lamon's later book of *Reminiscences*, he did much to counteract the harsh and to my mind incorrect impression given in his earlier book. But even in that book he affirmed that while Lincoln rejected the New Testament as a book of divine authority, he accepted its precepts as binding upon him and was a believer in the supernatural even to credulity (p. 503, 504).

In that same work Herndon set forth that Lincoln was a firm believer in God and attempted, as he said, "to put at rest forever the charge that Mr. Lincoln was an atheist." He declared, however, that Lincoln

did not believe in a special creation, but in an "evolution under law"; not in special revelation, "but in miracles under law"; and that "all things both matter and mind were governed by laws universal, absolute, and eternal" (p. 494).

To this Herndon gives even more emphatic testimony in his own book. It must then be remembered that while in the loose nomenclature of these authors Mr. Lincoln was an "infidel" it is these same authors that assure us, as Lamon does, that "his theological opinions were substantially those expounded by Theodore Parker."—LAMON: *Life of Lincoln*, p. 486.

The question whether Lincoln's views underwent any substantial change after leaving Springfield, has been answered in the negative by John G. Nicolay, his private secretary at the White House; who affirmed that "Mr. Lincoln did not, to my knowledge, in any way change his religious views, opinions, or beliefs, from the time he left Springfield to the day of his death."

This probably is correct. Mr. Lincoln was not conscious of any radical change; but Mrs. Lincoln noticed a change in him after Willie's death, which grew more pronounced after his visit to Gettysburg, and his own faith, while undergoing no sudden and radical transformation, manifests a consistent evolution.

But we are not sure how much Mr. Nicolay believed Lincoln's views to have been in need of change. He said in another place:

> "Benevolence and forgiveness were the very basis of his character. His nature was deeply religious, but he belonged to no denomination; he

> had faith in the eternal justice and boundless mercy of Providence, and made the Golden Rule of Christ his practical creed."—JOHN G. NICOLAY, in article "Abraham Lincoln" in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, ninth edition, XIV, 662.

Lincoln believed in divine destiny. He could hardly have believed otherwise. The preaching to which he listened was such as to make it all but impossible for him to hold any other views. He believed so strongly that his own life was under divine guidance that Lamon and Herndon speak of it in a thinly veiled scorn as though it were in Lincoln's mind a mark of conscious superiority. Whether it was such a mark or not does not now concern us. Lincoln believed in divine guidance. He had faith in prayer and his practice of prayer is attested by many and credible witnesses. A man of his temperament and training and sense of responsibility could not well have been kept from praying. Prayer was a necessary part of his life.

Lincoln not only had faith in prayer considered as a means of obtaining results from God; he believed in it as establishing a relation with God, a covenant relation, such as Abraham of old established. If such a faith seems inconsistent with any other elements in the faith or doubt of Abraham Lincoln, then the inconsistency must stand, for he did not hold his views in entire consistency. In no respect does this faith in the covenant relation emerge more strongly than in connection with the issue of the Emancipation Proclamation. Fortunately, the evidence here is incontestable. The Proclamation immediately became historic. Lincoln had to

autograph many copies to be sold at sanitary fairs—copies which now sell at one thousand dollars each. Every incident relating to the event became of immediate interest; and members of the Cabinet had to group themselves for Carpenter's historic painting, of which he has left so valuable a literary monument in his *Six Months in the White House*. The members of the Cabinet had no time to invent or imagine a set of incidents mythical in character, for each of them had to describe many times, and immediately, the circumstances which attended the reading of the Proclamation to the Cabinet on Monday, September 22, 1862.

This is the important and incontestable fact, that Lincoln did not bring the Proclamation to the Cabinet for discussion, except as to minor details. He had already determined to issue it. He had promised God that he would do so.

This was the statement which profoundly impressed the members of the Cabinet,—the President told them that he had already promised God that he would free the slaves.

The Diary of Gideon Welles was first published in full in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1909, portions of it having earlier appeared in the Century; but it was written day by day as the events occurred. His record for Monday, September 22, 1862, begins thus:

> "We have a special Cabinet meeting. The subject was the Proclamation concerning emancipating slaves after a certain date in States that should then be in rebellion. For several weeks the subject has been suspended, but, the President says,

never lost sight of. When the subject was submitted in August, and indeed in taking it up, the President stated that the matter was finally decided, but that he felt it to be due to us to make us acquainted with the fact and invite criticism of the Proclamation. There were some differences in the Cabinet, but he had formed his own conclusions, and made his own decisions. He had, he said, made a vow, a covenant, that if God gave us the victory in the approaching battle (which had just been fought) he would consider it his duty to move forward in the cause of emancipation. We might think it strange, he said, but there were times when he felt uncertain how to act; that he had in this way submitted the disposal of matters when the way was not clear to his mind what he should do. God had decided this question in favor of the slave. He was satisfied it was right—was confirmed and strengthened in his action by the vow and its results; his mind was fixed, his decision made; but he wished his paper announcing his course to be as correct in terms as it could be made without any attempt to change his determination. For that was fixed."—"The Diary of Gideon Welles," *Atlantic Monthly*, 1909, p. 369.

We have no present concern with the question whether Lincoln's method of determining the divine will was a reasonable method, or wholly consistent with some of his own questions and doubts; what concerns us is that the President invited no discussion of the Proclamation in its essential elements; any disposition which any of the members of the Cabinet might have felt to discuss the instrument itself or seek to dissuade the President from issuing it was stopped by his quiet and emphatic declaration that he had made a covenant with God, and must keep his vow; and that he was strengthened in his own conviction that the Proclamation was in accord with the will of God.

We must not pass lightly over the religious aspects of the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln had submitted his first draft of the Proclamation to the Cabinet on Tuesday, July 22, 1862, and it met with strong opposition. Only two members of the Cabinet favored it; Seward and Chase were strongly against it and the others thought it inopportune. With the memory of this opposition, which in July had practically voted the President down, Mr. Lincoln brought the matter again on September 22, not for discussion, for as he said he knew the view already of every member of the Cabinet, but he had promised God that he would do this thing. That very night Secretary Chase wrote in his diary an account of the meeting, which is condensed as follows:

> "*Monday, September 22, 1862.*
>
> "To Department about nine. State Department messenger came with notice to heads of Departments to meet at twelve. Received sundry callers. Went to White House. All the

members of the Cabinet were in attendance. There was some general talk, and the President mentioned that Artemus Ward had sent him his book. Proposed to read a chapter which he thought very funny. Read it, and seemed to enjoy it very much.

"The President then took a graver tone, and said, 'Gentlemen: I have, as you are aware, thought a great deal about the relation of this war to slavery; and you all remember that, several weeks ago, I read to you an order I had prepared on this subject, which, on account of objections made by some of you, was not issued. Ever since then my mind has been much occupied with this subject, and I have thought, all along, that the time for acting on it might probably come. I think the time has come now. I wish it was a better time. I wish that we were in a better condition. The action of the army against the Rebels has not been quite what I should best like. But they have been driven out of Maryland, and Pennsylvania is no longer in danger of invasion. When the Rebel Army was at Frederick, I determined, as soon as it should be driven out of Maryland, to issue a Proclamation of Emancipation, such as I thought most likely to be useful. I said nothing to anyone, but I made

the promise to myself, and [hesitating a little] to my Maker. The Rebel Army is now driven out, and I am going to fulfill that promise. I have got you together to hear what I have written down. I do not wish your advice about the main matter, for that I have determined for myself. This, I say, without intending anything but respect for any one of you. But I already know the views of each on this question. They have been heretofore expressed, and I have considered them as thoroughly and carefully as I can. What I have written is that which my reflections have determined me to say. If there is anything in the expressions I use, or in any minor matter, which any one of you thinks had best be changed I shall be glad to receive the suggestions. One other observation I will make. I know very well that many others might, in this matter as in others, do better than I can; and if I was satisfied that the public confidence was more fully possessed by any one of them than by me, and knew of any constitutional way in which he could be put in my place, he should have it. I would gladly yield it to him. But though I believe that I have not so much of the confidence of the people as I had some time since, I do not know that,

> all things considered, any other person has more; and however this may be, there is no way in which I can have any other man put where I am. I am here; I must do the best I can, and bear the responsibility of taking the course which I feel I ought to take.'"—WARDEN: *Life of S. P. Chase*, pp. 481-82, quoted in Nicolay and Hay, VI, 159-60.

In the diaries of Secretaries Welles and Chase we have incontrovertible testimony. The two records were made independently and on that very night, and were not published for years afterward. There was no possible collusion or reshaping of the testimony in the light of subsequent events, no time for imagination to play any part in enlarging upon the incident. The President recognized that the time was not wholly propitious, that a majority of the Cabinet probably would not be disposed to adopt his Proclamation if put to vote, that the people's support of the administration was wavering and unpredicable and none too certain to approve this measure. Under these conditions it is impossible to consider the Emancipation Proclamation solely from the standpoint either of political expediency or of military necessity. The fact which silenced all opposition in the Cabinet was the President's solemn statement that he had made a covenant with God, and that he must keep it.

There is a sense in which the solemnity is heightened by the grotesque incident of the chapter from Artemus Ward read at the beginning. There is an aspect in which the sublimity of that Cabinet meeting's ending is heightened by the ridiculousness

of its beginning. In any event, it shows that the mind of Abraham Lincoln that morning was in what for him was a thoroughly healthy condition. However incongruous it might have been for another man to begin so solemn a meeting with a chapter from Artemus Ward, it was a mark of sanity, of thorough normal psychology, when done by Abraham Lincoln. It showed that the moral overstrain was finding its relief from excessive tension in what for Lincoln was an entirely normal way.

As before stated, these two contemporary accounts by Welles and Chase, though made at the time, were not published until years afterward; but there was another publication that was virtually contemporary. Frank B. Carpenter, the artist, began almost immediately his noted painting of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, and in the course of his six months in the White House had long and repeated interviews with all members of the Cabinet, and talked with them about every incident connected with that event. He published his account in his book in 1866, while all the members of the Cabinet were living, and, so far as known, was never objected to or proposed to be modified by any member of the Cabinet. According to his statement, Lincoln told the Cabinet that he had promised God that he would do this, uttering the last part of this sentence in a low voice. Secretary Chase, who was sitting near the President, asked Mr. Lincoln if he had correctly understood him, and the President repeated what he had affirmed before, saying:

> "I made a solemn vow before God, that if General Lee was driven back from Pennsylvania, I would crown the result by the declaration of

> freedom for the slaves."—*Six Months in the White House*, pp. 89, 90.

In this threefold attestation we have irrefutable testimony that the determining motive of President Lincoln in his issue of the Emancipation Proclamation was the keeping of his solemn covenant with God.

It is all but impossible to exaggerate the significance of this incident. The essential fact is as fully proved as human testimony can possibly prove a fact. When we remember the extreme reticence of Abraham Lincoln on all such matters, and the fact of which he must have been painfully conscious that his Cabinet was not very favorably disposed toward the thing that he proposed to do, his quiet, outspoken, and repeated declaration that he had promised this thing to God is sufficient in itself to settle forever the essentially religious character of Abraham Lincoln. If we had no other word from his lips touching on the subject of religion but this one, we should be assured of his unfaltering belief in God, in a profound sense of his own personal responsibility to God, in prayer, and a personal relation with God.

This was no platitude uttered to meet the expectation of the religious people of the United States; it was no evasive generality intended to fit whatever religious desire might lie in the minds of those who heard him. It was no play to the gallery; it was no masquerade; every motive of pretense or hypocrisy or duplicity was absent. It was the sincere expression of the abiding faith of Abraham Lincoln in God, and prayer, and duty.

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Lincoln was a believer in the immortality of the soul.

[71] Herndon affirms this and declares that any attempt to deny it would imply that Lincoln was a dishonest man. He believed in the preservation of identity beyond the grave so that we shall be conscious of our own identity and be able to recognize our loved ones.

He believed in future punishment, but not in endless punishment. Punishment seemed to him so inevitable a part of an inexorable divine law that he sometimes objected to the preaching of the doctrine of forgiveness as being subversive of the fact of law, which he held must continue its sway in this world and in every world; but in eternal punishment he did not believe. His old neighbors in New Salem, his friends in Springfield, and those who knew him in Washington agree in this. We have already quoted from the letter of Isaac Cogdal to Mr. B. F. Irwin, April 10, 1874, who tells of a conversation he had with Mr. Lincoln in the latter's office in Springfield about 1859, concerning Mr. Lincoln's religious faith. Mr. Herndon was present. He says:

> "Mr. Lincoln expressed himself in about these words: He did not nor could not believe in the endless punishment of anyone of the human race. He understood punishment for sin to be a Bible doctrine; that the punishment was parental in its object, aim, and design, and intended for the good of the offender; hence it must cease when justice was satisfied. He added that all that was lost by the transgression of Adam was made good by the atonement; all that was lost by the

> fall was made good by the sacrifice. And he added this remark, that punishment being a provision of the gospel system, he was not sure but the world would be better if a little more punishment was preached by our ministers, and not so much pardon for sin."

William H. Hannah, in Lamon's group of citations, says:

> "Since 1856 Mr. Lincoln told me that he was a kind of immortalist; that he never could bring himself to believe in eternal punishment; that man lived but a little while here; and that, if eternal punishment were man's doom, he should spend that little life in vigilant and ceaseless preparation by never-ending prayer."—LAMON: *Life of Lincoln*, p. 489.

Some who have known of Lincoln's particular utterances on certain of these points have been misled, as it appears to me, by the similarity of some of these points to doctrines held by particular religious sects and have sought to identify Lincoln more or less with those denominations. The fact that he took portions of his positive thinking from Theodore Parker and William Ellery Channing, does not necessitate that he was a Unitarian; nor does the fact that he did not believe in eternal punishment compel his classification with Universalists. Theodore Parker and William E. Channing chanced to be the authors whose writings came into his

possession at a time when they served to define particular aspects of his own faith. Horace Bushnell, or Henry Ward Beecher might have served him quite as well and possibly in some respects better. For Lincoln's Calvinism was too deep-rooted to be eradicated; and a positive faith, both liberal and constructive, that could have been grafted on to that root might very possibly have served him better than anything so radical as in its nature to deny any essential part of what he felt he must continue to believe. Parker and Channing served him as James Smith's *Christian's Defence* and Robert Chambers' *Vestiges of Creation* served him in assuring him that a man could hold the views he held and know more about them than he knew and still be a reverent Christian. Such a Christian Abraham Lincoln appears to me to have been.

I do not think that any claim which I am here making for the faith of Abraham Lincoln can be denied on the basis of any authentic utterance of his. If at any point he is known to have said or written anything which is apparently inconsistent with these affirmations, that utterance I think will be found somewhere in this volume and the reader will have no difficulty in finding it and in giving it its proper weight. But I do not think the general position which this chapter sets forth can be seriously shaken. In the sense which this chapter has endeavored truthfully to set forth, Abraham Lincoln believed in God, in Christ, in the Bible, in prayer, in duty, and in immortality.

Religion is one thing and theology is another. A love of flowers is one thing and a knowledge of botany is another. A man may love a flower and call it by the wrong name, or know no name for it. A man may

have the religion of Christ, and hold very wrong opinions or conjectures concerning Christ. We are saved by faith, not by conjecture. No man is saved or lost because of the correctness of his opinions. Correct thinking is important; but it is not so important as a right attitude toward spiritual realities and practical duties. Faith and opinion are not unrelated, but neither are they identical.

Too much of the effort to prove that Abraham Lincoln was a Christian has begun and ended in the effort to show that on certain theological topics he cherished correct opinions. That would not prove him to be a Christian, nor would the lack of these certainly prove that he was not a Christian. Religion is of the heart and life; theology is of the brain and mind. Each is important, but theology is less important than religion.

Abraham Lincoln was not a theologian, and several of his theological opinions may have been incorrect; but there is good reason to believe that he was a true Christian. The world has need of a few theologians, and of a great many Christians.

It was Mr. Lincoln's custom when he read a paragraph which deeply interested him, to draw a pencil line around it in the book; and if it was something which he wished to commit to memory and meditate upon, he often copied it upon a scrap of paper. I own a half page of notepaper containing in Lincoln's handwriting and with his signature, a paragraph from Baxter's "Saint's Rest." The manuscript was owned by Hon. Winfield Smith, Lincoln's Attorney-General in 1864, and was among his private papers when he died. The paragraph reads:

> "It is more pleasing to God to see his people study Him and His will directly, than to spend the first and chief of their effort about attaining comfort for themselves. We have faith given us, principally that we might believe and live by it in daily applications of Christ. You may believe immediately (by God's help) but getting assurance of it may be the work of a great part of your life."

It would be interesting to know just what was in Lincoln's mind when he read this paragraph, and sat down with pen and ink to copy and meditate upon it. The "comfort" which Baxter was referring to in this passage was the comfort of assurance of salvation in Christ. It was a theme on which Mr. Lincoln heard many sermons, first and last, by Predestinarian preachers, both Baptist and Presbyterian. If a man was among the elect, how could he be sure of it, and what means could he take to make the assurance more certain? Baxter's answer was that assurance in this matter is less important than to study and obey God's will; and that faith is given us as something in whose exercise we may live daily without greatly troubling ourselves about fathomless mysteries. It was good doctrine for a man who had been reared as Lincoln had been reared, and the remainder of the passage was especially in line with his needs. He could believe immediately, even though the assurance of faith was long delayed. That assurance might be the work of a lifetime, but faith was something that might be lived upon now. The thought is akin to that in the fine lines of Lizzie York Case:

"*There is no unbelief:*

For thus by day and night unconsciously

The heart lives by the faith the lips deny,—

God knoweth why."

A man can live by a faith of which he has not full assurance—so said the sensible old Puritan, Richard Baxter—he can live on it though it take him nearly all his life to gain assurance; and I am certain he would have added, had he been asked, that if assurance never came, and our heart condemn us, "God is greater than our heart."

The carefully written paragraph in Lincoln's hand appears to indicate that the thought was one which deeply impressed Lincoln. Perhaps he felt that his own faith was of that sort, a faith on which a man could live, while going forward in the study and pursuit of the will of God, not seeking one's own comfort or the joy of complete assurance, but finding in the daily performance of duty the essential quality of true faith.

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CHAPTER XXIII

THE CREED OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

ABRAHAM LINCOLN made no effort, so far as we know, to formulate a creed. It would have been an exceedingly difficult thing for him to have accomplished. His utterances on religious subjects were not made as dogmatic affirmations. He merely uttered as occasion seemed to him to demand such sentiments and principles as expressed those aspects of truth which he felt and believed to need expression at those particular times. Nevertheless, these utterances together cover a somewhat wide range; and while they were not intended to epitomize any system of Christian doctrine, they make a nearer approach to an epitome of this character than on the whole might reasonably have been expected.

It will be interesting and profitable to close this study with a series of short quotations from documents, letters, and addresses, certified as authentic and touching directly upon points of Christian doctrine. In most instances these have been quoted already, with their context, but they are here brought together in briefer form in order to facilitate our inquiry whether they afford any material out of which might be made some approach to a statement of Christian faith.

Materials for a Lincoln creed:

I sincerely hope father may recover

his health, but, at all events, tell him to remember to call upon and confide in our great and good and merciful Maker, who will not turn away from him in any extremity. He notes the fall of a sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our heads, and He will not forget the dying man who puts his trust in Him.... If it be his lot to go now he will soon have a joyous meeting with many loved ones gone before, and where the rest of us with the help of God hope ere long to join them.—Letter to his dying father, January 12, 1851. *Complete Works*, I, 165.

Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him [Washington] I cannot succeed. With that assistance, I cannot fail. Trusting in His care who can go with me, and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.—Farewell Address, Springfield, February 11, 1861. *Complete Works*, I, 672.

If the Almighty Ruler of Nations, with His eternal truth and justice, be on our side of the North, or on yours of the South, that truth and that justice will surely prevail by the

judgment of this great tribunal of the American people.... Intelligence, patriotism, Christianity, and a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust in the best way all our present difficulty.... My dissatisfied fellow countrymen ... you have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the government, while I have the most solemn one to preserve, protect, and defend it.—First Inaugural, March 4, 1861. *Complete Works*, II, 7.

May God give you that consolation which is beyond all earthly power.—Letter to parents of Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, May 25, 1861. *Complete Works*, II, 52.

And having thus chosen our course, without guile and with pure purpose, let us renew our trust in God and go forward without fear and with manly hearts.—First Message to Congress, July 4, 1861. *Complete Works*, II, 66.

Whereas it is fit and becoming in all people, at all times, to acknowledge and revere the supreme government of God; to bow in humble submission to His chastisements; to confess and deplore their sins and transgressions, in the full conviction that the fear of the Lord is the

beginning of wisdom; and to pray with all fervency and contrition for the pardon of their past offenses, and for a blessing upon their present and prospective action:

And whereas when our own beloved country, once, by the blessing of God, united, prosperous, and happy, is now afflicted with factions and civil war, it is particularly fit for us to recognize the hand of God in this terrible visitation, and in sorrowful remembrance of our own faults and crimes as a nation and as individuals, to humble ourselves before Him and to pray for His mercy.—National Fast Day Proclamation, August 12, 1861. *Complete Works*, II, 73.

In the midst of unprecedented political troubles we have cause of great gratitude to God for unusual health and most abundant harvest.... The struggle of today is not altogether for today—it is for a vast future also. With a reliance on Providence all the more firm and earnest, let us proceed to the great task which events have devolved upon us.—Annual Message to Congress, December 3, 1861. *Complete Works*, II, 93 and 106.

Whereas it has seemed to me probable that the unsuccessful

application made for the commutation of his sentence may have prevented the said Nathaniel Gordon from making the necessary preparation for the awful change which awaits him: Now therefore be it known that I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, have granted and do hereby grant unto him, the said Nathaniel Gordon, a respite of the above recited sentence, until Friday, the 21st of February, A.D. 1862.... In granting this respite it becomes my painful duty to admonish the prisoner that, relinquishing all expectation of pardon by human authority, he refer himself alone to the mercy of the common God and Father of all men. —Proclamation of Respite for a Convicted Slave Trader, February 4, 1862. *Complete Works*, II, 121-22.

Being a humble instrument in the hands of our Heavenly Father, as I am, and as we all are, to work out His great purposes, I have desired that all my works and acts may be according to His will; and that it might be so, I have sought His aid.—Reply to Mrs. Gurney and Deputation from Society of Friends, September [28?], 1862. *Complete Works*, II, 243.

In full view of my great

responsibility to my God and to my country, I earnestly beg the attention of Congress and the people to the subject.—Message to Congress recommending Emancipation with Compensation to Owners, March 6, 1862. *Complete Works*, II, 130.

It has pleased Almighty God to vouchsafe signal victories to the land and naval forces.... It is therefore recommended to the people of the United States that at their next weekly assemblages ... they especially acknowledge and render thanks to our Heavenly Father for these inestimable blessings; that they then and there implore spiritual consolation in behalf of all who have been brought into affliction by the casualties and calamities of sedition and civil war; and that they reverently invoke the Divine guidance to our national counsels, to the end that they may speedily result in restoration of peace, harmony, and unity.—Special Thanksgiving Proclamation, April 10, 1862. *Complete Works*, II, 143.

The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both may be, and one must be, wrong. God cannot be for and against the same thing at the same time. In the present civil war it is

quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party; and yet the human instrumentalities, working just as they do, are of the best adaptation to effect His purpose. I am almost ready to say that this is probably true; that God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet. By His mere great power on the minds of the now contestants, He could have either saved or destroyed the Union without a human contest. Yet the contest began. And, having begun, He could give the final victory to either side any day. Yet the contest proceeds.—A Meditation on the Divine Will in the handwriting of Mr. Lincoln, formulated about September 30, 1862, and not written for the eye of men but apparently in the effort to define the moral aspects of the subject and to clarify his own spiritual outlook.—*Complete Works*, II, 243-44.

Whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the

Holy Scriptures and proved by all history, that those nations only are blest whose God is the Lord; And inasmuch as we know that by His Divine law nations, like individuals, are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war which now desolates the land may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people?—Fast Day Proclamation, March 30, 1863. *Complete Works*, II, 319.

It is meet and right to recognize and confess the presence of the Almighty Father and the power of His hand equally in these triumphs and in these sorrows.... I invite the people of the United States ... to render the homage due to the Divine Majesty for the wonderful things He has done in the nation's behalf, and invoke the influence of his Holy Spirit to subdue the anger which has produced and so long sustained a needless and cruel rebellion.—Thanksgiving Proclamation, July 15, 1863. *Complete Works*, II, 370.

In regard to the Great Book, I have only to say, it is the best gift which God has ever given man. All the good from the Saviour of the world

is communicated to us through this book.—Response to Presentation of Bible. *Complete Works*, Nicolay and Hay's new and enlarged edition, twelve volumes, N. Y., 1905, X, 217-18.

Signal successes ... call for devout acknowledgment to the Supreme Being in whose hand are the destinies of nations.—Thanksgiving Proclamation, September 3, 1864. *Complete Works*, II, 571.

God knows best ... surely He intends some great good to follow this mighty convulsion, which no mortal could make and no mortal can stave.... That you believe this I doubt not; and believing it, I shall still receive for our country and myself your earnest prayers to our Father in Heaven.—Letter to Mrs. Gurney, September 4, 1864. *Complete Works*, II, 573-74.

I do further recommend to my fellow citizens aforesaid, that they do reverently humble themselves in the dust, and from thence offer up penitent and fervent prayers and supplications to the Great Disposer of events for a return of the inestimable blessings of peace, union, and harmony.—Thanksgiving Proclamation, October 20, 1864.

Complete Works, II, 587.

I am thankful to God for this approval of the people; ... I give thanks to the Almighty for this evidence of the people's resolution to stand by free government and the rights of humanity.—Response to Serenade following Re-election, November 9, 1864. *Complete Works*, II, 595.

I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think and feel, and yet I have never understood that the Presidency conferred upon me an unrestricted right to act officially upon this judgment and feeling.... I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now at the end of three years' struggle, the nation's condition is not what either party, or any man, devised or expected. God alone can claim it. Whither it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills also that we of the North as well as you of the South, shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein new cause to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God.—Letter to A. G. Hodges, April 4, 1864. *Complete Works*, II, 508-09.

Enough is known of army operations within the last five days to claim an especial gratitude to God, while what remains undone demands our most sincere prayers to, and reliance upon, Him without whom all human effort is vain.—Recommendation of Thanksgiving, May 9, 1864. *Complete Works*, II, 519.

I invite and request ... all loyal and law-abiding people ... to render to the Almighty and merciful Ruler of the universe homages and confessions.—Proclamation of Day of Prayer, July 7, 1864. *Complete Works*, II, 544.

Again the blessings of health and abundant harvest claim our profoundest gratitude to Almighty God.—Annual Address to Congress, December 6, 1864. *Complete Works*, II, 604.

You all may recollect that in taking up the sword thus forced into our hands, this government appealed to the prayers of the pious and good, and declared that it placed its whole dependence upon the favor of God. I now humbly and reverently, in your presence, reiterate the acknowledgment of that dependence, not doubting that, if it shall please the Divine Being who determines the destinies of nations,

this shall remain a united people, and that they will, humbly seeking the Divine guidance, make their prolonged national existence a source of new benefits to themselves and their successors, and to all classes and conditions of mankind.—Address to Committee from Evangelical Lutheran General Synod, May 6, 1862. *Complete Works*, II, 148.

Relying, as I do, upon Almighty Power, and encouraged, as I am, by the resolutions which you have just read, with the support which I receive from Christian men, I shall not hesitate to use all the means at my control to secure the termination of this rebellion, and will hope for success.—Address to Committee of Sixty-five from Presbyterian General Assembly, May 30, 1863. *Complete Works*, II, 342.

I expect [my Second Inaugural] to wear as well as—perhaps better than—anything I have produced; but I believe it is not immediately popular. Men are not flattered by being shown that there has been a difference of purpose between the Almighty and them. To deny it, however, in this case, is to deny that there is a God governing the world. It is a truth which I thought needed to be told, and, as whatever of

humiliation there is in it falls most directly on myself, I thought others might afford for me to tell it.—Letter to Thurlow Weed, March 15, 1865. *Complete Works*, II, 661.

It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged.... The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh." If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the Providence of God, must needs come, but which having continued through His appointed time, He now will remove and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those Divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him. Fondly do we hope—perfectly do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and

> until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still must it be said, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."
>
> With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in.—Second Inaugural, March 4, 1865. *Complete Works*, II, 657.

No one of the foregoing quotations is taken from a private conversation, nor copied from an unauthorized source. Some very pleasing selections might have been made from reasonably well-accredited sources, but all of the foregoing selections, without any exception, are taken from the authentic writings and addresses of Lincoln as compiled, edited, and authenticated by his private secretaries, John G. Nicolay and John Hay.

We might go much farther and could find a considerable body of additional material, but this is sufficient and more than sufficient for our purpose. In these utterances may be found something of the determinism that was hammered into Lincoln by the early Baptist preachers and riveted by James Smith, along with some of the humanitarianism of Parker and Channing, and much which lay unstratified in Lincoln's own mind but flowed spontaneously from his pen or dropped from his lips because it was native to his thinking and had come to be a component part of his life. Anyone who cares to do so may piece these utterances together and test his

success in making a creed out of them. They lend themselves somewhat readily to such an arrangement.

In the following arrangement no liberties have been taken except to change the past tense to the present, or the plural to the singular, and to add connectives, and preface the words "I believe." Except for changes such as these, which in no way modify the sense or natural force of the utterances, the creed which follows is wholly in the words of Abraham Lincoln. A very little tampering with the text would have made smoother reading, but this is not necessary. It has the simplicity and the rugged honesty of the man who said these words.

THE CREED OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN IN HIS OWN WORDS

I believe in God, the Almighty Ruler of Nations, our great and good and merciful Maker, our Father in Heaven, who notes the fall of a sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our heads.

I believe in His eternal truth and justice.

I recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history that those nations only are blest whose God is the Lord.

I believe that it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, and to invoke the influence of His Holy Spirit; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon.

I believe that it is meet and right to recognize and confess the presence of the Almighty Father equally in our triumphs and in those sorrows which we may

justly fear are a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins to the needful end of our reformation.

I believe that the Bible is the best gift which God has ever given to men. All the good from the Saviour of the world is communicated to us through this book.

I believe the will of God prevails. Without Him all human reliance is vain. Without the assistance of that Divine Being, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail.

Being a humble instrument in the hands of our Heavenly Father, I desire that all my works and acts may be according to His will; and that it may be so, I give thanks to the Almighty, and seek His aid.

I have a solemn oath registered in heaven to finish the work I am in, in full view of my responsibility to my God, with malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right as God gives me to see the right. Commending those who love me to His care, as I hope in their prayers they will commend me, I look through the help of God to a joyous meeting with many loved ones gone before.

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APPENDICES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX I

EXTRACT FROM NEWTON BATEMAN'S LECTURE
ON
LINCOLN WITH VARIANTS OF THE FAREWELL ADDRESS, AT SPRINGFIELD,
FEBRUARY 11, 1861.

BOTH for its own value as an incident in the life of Mr. Lincoln and because it affords us opportunity of understanding the accuracy of Newton Bateman's verbal memory, the following is quoted from his lecture on Abraham Lincoln, a lecture delivered many times in the later years of his life and printed by his family in 1899 after his death:

> "On the eleventh of February, 1861, on the day preceding his fifty-second birthday, Mr. Lincoln set out for Washington. He had sent special invitations to a few of his old friends to accompany him as far as Indianapolis. That I was included in the number, I shall be pardoned for remembering with peculiar pleasure. That note of invitation is preserved among my most cherished

memorabilia of Abraham Lincoln. I shall ever regret that imperative official duties would not allow me to join the party.

"But I accompanied him to the railroad station, and stood by his side on the platform of the car, when he delivered that memorable farewell to his friends and neighbors. Of those, an immense concourse had assembled to bid him good-by. The day was dark and chill, and a drizzling rain had set in. The signal bell had rung, and all was in readiness for the departure, when Mr. Lincoln appeared on the front platform of the special car—removed his hat, looked out for a moment upon the sea of silent, upturned faces, and heads bared in loving reverence and sympathy, regardless of the rain; and, in a voice broken and tremulous with emotion and a most unutterable sadness, yet slow and measured and distinct and with a certain prophetic far-off look which no one who saw can ever forget, began:

"'My friends, no one, not in my position can appreciate the sadness I feel at this parting. To this people I owe all that I am. Here I have lived more than a quarter of a century. Here my children were born, and here one of them lies buried. I know

not how soon I shall see you again. A duty devolves upon me which is greater, perhaps, than that which has devolved upon any other man since the days of Washington. He never would have succeeded, except for the aid of Divine Providence, upon which he at all times relied. I feel that I cannot succeed without the same divine aid which sustained him; and upon the same Almighty Being I place my reliance and support. And I hope you, my friends, will pray that I may receive that divine assistance, without which I cannot succeed, and with which success is certain. Again, I bid you all an affectionate farewell.'

"His pale face was literally wet with tears as he re-entered the car, and the train rolled out of the city, which Abraham Lincoln was to enter no more—till, his great work finished he would come back from the war, a victor and a conqueror though with the seal of death upon his visage. Some politicians derided the solemn words of that farewell—but I knew they were the utterances of his inmost soul—never did speech of man move me as that did. Seeing every mournful tremor of those lips—noting every shadow that flitted over that face—catching every inflection of that voice—the words seemed to drop, every one, into my

> heart, and to be crystallized in my memory. I hurried back to my office, locked the door (for I felt that I must be alone), wrote out the address from memory and had it published in the city papers in advance of the reporters. And when the reports of the stenographers were published, they differed from mine in only two or three words, and as to even those, I have always believed that mine were right for the speech was engraved on my heart and my memory, and I had but to copy the engraving."—*Abraham Lincoln*, an address by Hon. Newton Bateman, LL.D., published by the Cadmus Club, 1899, Galesburg.

Mr. Lincoln's Farewell Address, as given by Mr. Bateman in the foregoing quotation, would appear to have undergone some revision by him after its printing. He says that he furnished it to the press and that it came out in advance of the version taken down by the reporter. On this point his memory appears to be correct. The *Illinois State Journal* of February 12, 1861, contains a report of Mr. Lincoln's address, which is almost certainly that furnished by Mr. Bateman.

Lincoln's Farewell Address as Printed in the Illinois State Journal, February 12, 1860, probably from the notes of Hon.
Newton Bateman.

> "Friends, no one who has never been placed in a like position, can

understand my feelings at this hour, nor the oppressive sadness I feel at this parting. For more than a quarter of a century I have lived among you, and during all that time I have received nothing but kindness at your hands. Here I have lived from my youth until now I am an old man. Here the most sacred ties of earth were assumed; here all of my children were born, and here one of them lies buried. To you, dear friends, I owe all that I have, all that I am. All the strange, checkered past seems now to crowd upon my mind. Today I leave you: I go to assume a task more difficult than that which devolved upon General Washington. Unless the great God who assisted him shall be with me and aid me, I must fail. But if the same Omniscient Mind and the same Almighty Arm that directed and protected him shall guide and support me, I shall not fail; I shall succeed. Let us all pray that the God of our fathers may not forsake us now. To Him I commend you all; permit me to ask that with equal sincerity [the word is printed security but corrected with pen] and faith, you all will invoke His wisdom and guidance for me. With these few words I must leave you—for how long I know not. Friends, one and all, I must now bid you an affectionate farewell."

The So-called Shorthand Report

The so-called shorthand report appears on close examination not to be a shorthand report, but is that which appeared in the Chicago and other papers from the Hay and Lincoln revision, more or less garbled in telegraphic transmission.

The Lincoln-Hay Version of the Farewell Address

> "This address was correctly printed for the first time in the Century Magazine for December, 1887, from the original manuscript, having been written down after the train started, partly by Mr. Lincoln's own hand and partly by that of his private secretary from his dictation."—NICOLAY AND HAY, *Life of Lincoln*, II, 291.

It is thus apparent that we do not have any verbatim report of the precise words which Lincoln uttered; but the Illinois Historical Society has accepted this as the accredited version. It is certainly that which Lincoln wished to be remembered as having said; but it is quite possible that in one or two of the variant words Bateman may have recalled it more accurately than Lincoln himself:

> "My friends: No one not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century and have passed from a youth to an old man. Here my children have been

born and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him, who can go with me and remain with you and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell."

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APPENDIX II

"HIGH-HANDED OUTRAGE AT UTICA"[72]

By ARTEMUS WARD

BISHOP FOWLER and other lecturers and authors have drawn for us beautiful pictures of Lincoln reading to his Cabinet a chapter in the Bible before submitting his draft of the Emancipation Proclamation. The true story of that incident is related in the foregoing pages. It may be that some readers who are unfamiliar with the now little-read writings of "Artemus Ward" will be glad to know precisely what it was that the President read on that day; and as the chapter is very short, it will be given herewith.

No form of literature is more evanescent than humor. The fun-loving public of one generation labors hard to discover the reasons why other generations laughed over the old-time jokes. But there are elements in Artemus Ward that still provoke a smile. The chapter which amused Lincoln on that day related to the virtue of a community which would not permit the exhibition of Artemus Ward's famous Wax Works because the reproduction of the Last Supper contained the figure of Judas. Some reader may need to be told that there was no such show. The author of this and the other burlesques that bore the name of Artemus Ward (Charles F. Browne), presented himself in these sketches as a good-natured humbug, running a "highly moral show" with "Wax-figgers" and other attractions. He was never so

delightful as when disclosing his own shams, as when the mob pulled the hay out of the fat man.

Browne's book had a chapter in which he assisted Lincoln to form his Cabinet. His first assistance was to turn out all the office-seekers by threatening to turn his "Boy Constrictor" in among them; and then advised Mr. Lincoln to fill his Cabinet with Showmen, all of whom were honest and had nary a politic; "for particulars see small bills." This and other chapters delighted Lincoln; but the one he read to his Cabinet just before presenting the second draft of the Emancipation Proclamation, was the following:

High-handed Outrage at Utica

In the Faul of 1856, I showed my show in Utiky, a trooly grate sitty in the State of New York.

The people gave me a cordyal recepshun. The press was loud in her prases.

1 day as I was giving a description of my Beests and Snaiks in my usual flowry stile what was my skorn & disgust to see a big burly fellew walk up to the cage containin my wax figgers of the Lord's Supper, and cease Judas Iscarrot by the feet and drag him onto the ground. He then commenced fur to pound him as hard as he cood.

"What under the son are you abowt?" cried I.

Sez he, "What did you brung this pussylanermus cuss here fur?" & he hit the wax figger another tremjis blow on the hed.

Sez I, "You egrejes ass, that air's a wax figger—a representashun of the false 'Postle."

Sez he, "That's all very well fur you to say but I tell

you, old man, that Judas Iscarrot can't show hisself in Utiky by a darn site!" with whuch observashun he caved in Judassis hed. The young man belonged to 1 of the first famerlies in Utiky. I sood him, and the Joory brawt in a verdick of Arson in the 3rd degree.

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APPENDIX III

THE CONVERSION OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

By the REV. EDWARD L. WATSON

THE religion of Abraham Lincoln is so much in debate that I feel called upon to give the following narrative of an event of which little seems to be known—and which is of real importance in understanding the man. He has been called an infidel —an unbeliever of varying degrees of blatancy. That he was a Christian in the real sense of the term is plain from his life. That he was converted during a Methodist revival seems not to be a matter of common report. The personal element of this narrative is necessary to unfold the story. In 1894 I was appointed to the pastorate of the Hennepin Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, Minneapolis, Minn., by Bishop Cyrus D. Foss, being transferred from Frederick, Md., a charge in Baltimore Conference. It was in October that we entered the parsonage, which was a double house, the other half being rented by the trustees. Shortly after our occupancy of the church house William B. Jacquess moved into the rented half of the property, and through this fact I became acquainted with Col. James F. Jacquess, his brother. At this time Colonel Jacquess was an old man of eighty years or more, of commanding presence and wearing a long beard which was as white as snow. His title grew out of the fact of his being the commanding officer of the Seventy-third Illinois Volunteer Infantry, known as

the Preacher Regiment. Its name was given through the publication in the Cincinnati *Commercial* in September, 1862, of the roster of its officers:

Colonel—Rev. James F. Jacquess, D.D., late president of Quincy College.

Lieutenant-Colonel—Rev. Benjamin F. Northcott.

Major—Rev. William A. Presson.

Captains—Company B, Rev. W. B. M. Colt; Company C, Rev. P. McNutt; Company F, Rev. George W. Montgomery; Company H, Rev. James I. Davidson; Company I, Rev. Peter Wallace; Company K, Rev. R. H. Laughlin.

Six or seven of the twenty lieutenants were also licensed Methodist preachers. Henry A. Castle, sergeant-major, was the author of the article and a son-in-law, if I mistake not, of Colonel Jacquess.

The history of this regiment is in brief, as follows: It was organized at the instance of Governor Dick Yates, under Colonel Jacquess, in August, 1862, at Camp Butler, in Illinois, and became part of General Buell's army. It fought nobly at Perryville, and in every battle in which the Army of the Cumberland was engaged, from October, 1862, to the rout of Hood's army at Nashville. Its dead were found at Murfreesboro, Chickamauga, Missionary Ridge, where Colonel Jacquess won especial distinction, and in the succession of battles from Chattanooga to the fall of Atlanta. It was frequently complimented by the commanding generals and was unsurpassed in bravery and endurance. It left the State one of the largest, and returned one of the smallest, having lost two-thirds of its men in its three years' service.

Colonel Jacquess was its only colonel and came

home disabled by wounds received at Chickamauga, where two horses were shot under him. He refused to the last (1897) to receive a pension, until in his extreme old age, at the urgent request of the Society of the Survivors of the Seventy-third Illinois, he allowed it to be applied for. He pathetically said: "My grandfathers were Revolutionary soldiers and you could get up a row if you mentioned pensions. My father and my uncles were in the War of 1812, and would take none. I had hoped not to receive one—but I am unable now to do anything, and it has been my desire, and not the fault of the government, that I have never received a pension." These words were spoken in 1897—and not long afterward Colonel Jacquess went to his reward.

Toward the end of the war President Lincoln sent Colonel Jacquess as a secret emissary to arrange for peace and the settlement of the slave question, so as to avert further shedding of blood. His adventures in this role are of thrilling interest. The foregoing is told to show the quality of the man whom it was my privilege to meet in 1896, when he was in extreme old age. The honors conferred upon him by President Lincoln and the confidence reposed in him grew out of events which preceded the war. This was no other than the conversion of Mr. Lincoln under the ministry of the Rev. James F. Jacquess, at Springfield, Ill., in the year 1839. The Rev. James F. Jacquess was stationed at this new town—then of but a few thousand inhabitants—in 1839, when Lincoln met him during a series of revival services conducted in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Lincoln had but recently come to the town—having removed from New Salem, which was in a decadent state. As a member of the Legislature, Lincoln had been a chief agent in establishing the State capital at

Springfield, and though in debt and exceedingly poor, he hoped to find friends and practice in the growing town. He was then thirty years of age and had had few advantages of any sort. It was on a certain night, when the pastor preached from the text, "Ye must be born again," that Lincoln was in attendance and was greatly interested. After the service he came round to the little parsonage, and like another Nicodemus, asked, "How can these things be?" Mr. Jacquess explained as best he could the mystery of the new birth and at Lincoln's request, he and his wife kneeled and prayed with the future President. It was not long before Mr. Lincoln expressed his sense of pardon and arose with peace in his heart.

The narrative, as told thus far, is as my memory recalled it. Since writing it, the same as told by Colonel Jacquess has recently been discovered by me in Minutes of the Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Reunion Survivors Seventy-third Regiment, Illinois Infantry, Volunteers (page 30), a copy of which is before me. This meeting, the last (probably), that Colonel Jacquess attended, was held Tuesday and Wednesday, September 28, 29, 1897, in the Supreme Court room of the State Capitol Building, Springfield, Ill. To quote Colonel Jacquess: "The mention of Mr. Lincoln's name recalls to my mind an occurrence that perhaps I ought to mention. I notice that a number of lectures are being delivered recently on Abraham Lincoln. Bishop Fowler has a most splendid lecture on Abraham Lincoln, but they all, when they reach one point run against a stone wall, and that is in reference to Mr. Lincoln's religious sentiments. I happen to know something on that subject that very few persons know. My wife, who has been dead nearly two years, was the only witness of what I am

going to state to you as having occurred. Very soon after my second year's work as a minister in the Illinois Conference, I was sent to Springfield. There were ministers in the Illinois Conference who had been laboring for twenty-five years to get to Springfield, the capital of the State. When the legislature met there were a great many people here, and it was thought to be a matter of great glory among the ministers to be sent to Springfield. But I was not pleased with my assignment. I felt my inability to perform the work. I did not know what to do. I simply talked to the Lord about it, however, and told Him that unless I had help I was going to run away. I heard a voice saying to me, 'Fear not,' and I understood it perfectly. Now I am coming to the point I want to make to you. I was standing at the parsonage door one Sunday morning, a beautiful morning in May, when a little boy came up to me and said: 'Mr. Lincoln sent me around to see if you was going to preach today.' Now, I had met Mr. Lincoln, but I never thought any more of Abe Lincoln than I did of any one else. I said to the boy: 'You go back and tell Mr. Lincoln that if he will come to church he will see whether I am going to preach or not.' The little fellow stood working his fingers and finally said: 'Mr. Lincoln told me he would give me a quarter if I would find out whether you are going to preach.' I did not want to rob the little fellow of his income, so I told him to tell Mr. Lincoln that I was going to try to preach. I was always ready and willing to accept any assistance that came along, and whenever a preacher, or one who had any pretense in that direction, would come along I would thrust him into my pulpit and make him preach, because I felt that anybody could do better than I could.

"The church was filled that morning. It was a good-

sized church, but on that day all the seats were filled. I had chosen for my text the words: 'Ye must be born again,' and during the course of my sermon I laid particular stress on the word 'must.' Mr. Lincoln came into the church after the services had commenced, and there being no vacant seats, chairs were put in the altar in front of the pulpit, and Mr. Lincoln and Governor French and wife sat in the altar during the entire services, Mr. Lincoln on my left and Governor French on my right, and I noticed that Mr. Lincoln appeared to be deeply interested in the sermon. A few days after that Sunday Mr. Lincoln called on me and informed me that he had been greatly impressed with my remarks on Sunday and that he had come to talk with me further on the matter. I invited him in, and my wife and I talked and prayed with him for hours. Now, I have seen many persons converted; I have seen hundreds brought to Christ, and if ever a person was converted, Abraham Lincoln was converted that night in my house. His wife was a Presbyterian, but from remarks he made to me he could not accept Calvinism. He never joined my church, but I will always believe that since that night Abraham Lincoln lived and died a Christian gentleman."

Here ends the narrative of Colonel Jacquess. Now compare that which my memory preserved for the past thirteen years and the Colonel's own printed account, and the discrepancies are small. It is with pleasure I am able to confirm my memory by the words of the original narrator. It is with no small degree of pleasure that I am able to prove that Methodism had a hand in the making of the greatest American. Colonel James F. Jacquess has gone to his reward, but it is his honor to have been used by his Master to help in the spiritualization of the great

man who piloted our national destinies in a time of exceeding peril. It is an honor to him, and through him to the denomination of which he was a distinguished member.

BALTIMORE, MD.
Methodist Christian Advocate
November 11, 1909.

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APPENDIX IV

THE REED LECTURE

THE LATER LIFE AND RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN[73]

WHILE the fate and future of the Christian religion in nowise depends upon the sentiments of Abraham Lincoln, yet the life and character of this remarkable man belong to the public, to tell for evil or for good on coming generations; and as the attempt has been made to impute to him the vilest sentiments, even to his dying day, it is fitting and just that the weakness and infidelity charged upon his later life should not go down unchallenged to posterity. The latest biography of Mr. Lincoln, published under the name of Col. W. H. Lamon, but with the large co-operation of Mr. W. H. Herndon, concerns itself with the endeavor to establish certain allegations injurious to the good name of the illustrious man, whose tragic and untimely death has consecrated his memory in the hearts of a grateful nation. Two charges in this biography are worthy of especial notice and disproof, —the charge that he was born a bastard, and the charge that he died an infidel. Mr. Lamon begins his pleasing task by raising dark and unfounded insinuations as to the legitimacy of his hero, and then occupies from twenty-five to thirty pages with evidence to prove that Mr. Lincoln was a confirmed infidel, and died playing a "sharp game on the Christian community"; that, in his "morbid ambition for popularity," he would say good Lord or good

Devil, "adjusting his religious sentiments to his political interests." In meeting these insinuations and charges I shall necessarily have recourse to political documents and papers, but it shall not be my aim to parade Mr. Lincoln's political opinions, further than to eliminate from his writings and speeches his religious sentiments.

As to the ungracious insinuation that Mr. Lincoln was not the child of lawful wedlock, I have only to say that it is an insinuation unsupported by a shadow of justifiable evidence. The only thing on which Mr. Lamon bases the insinuation is, that *he* has been unable to find any record of the marriage Mr. Lincoln's parents. Just as if it would be any evidence against the fact of their marriage if no record could be found. If every man in this country is to be considered as illegitimate who cannot produce his parents' certificate of marriage, or find a record of it in a family Bible anywhere, there will be a good many very respectable people in the same category with Mr. Lincoln. Such an insinuation might be raised with as much plausibility in the case of multitudes of the early settlers of the country. It is a questionable act of friendship thus to rake "the short and simple annals of the poor," and upon such slender evidence raise an insinuation so unfounded. But I am prepared to show that if Mr. Lamon has found no record of the marriage of Mr. Lincoln's parents, it is simply because he has not extended his researches as faithfully in this direction as he has in some others. It appears that there is a well-authenticated record of the marriage of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, and, in the same connection, the birth of Abraham Lincoln and Sarah Lincoln. Hearing that the Hon. J. C. Black, of Champaign, Ill., a warm personal friend of Mr.

Lincoln, had in his possession several papers given to him soon after Mr. Lincoln's death by a member of the family, and among them a leaf from the family Bible containing the record of the marriage of Mr. Lincoln's parents, I at once telegraphed to him in relation to this record, and have in my possession the following letter, which will explain itself:

CHAMPAIGN, ILL., Jan. 8th, 1873.

J. A. REED:

DEAR SIR—Your telegram of the 7th reached me this A. M. In reply permit me to say that I was in possession of the leaf of which you speak, and which contained the record of the marriage of Thos. Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, the birth of Abraham Lincoln and Sarah Lincoln. The leaf is very old, and is the last page of the Apocrypha. It was given to me, with certificate of genuineness, by Dennis F. Hanks in 1866. I have sent both record and certificate to Wm. P. Black, attorney at law, 131 La Salle Street, Chicago, Ill., and duly by him delivered to the Illinois Historical Association. Hon. I. N. Arnold called on my brother and obtained the originals for use in a revised edition of his life of Lincoln, and I understand that since then they have passed into the hands of Robt. Lincoln, Esq., where they were when I last heard from them. Hoping that what I have written may

be of some use, I remain

Very truly yours,
J. C. BLACK.

Presuming that the first of Colonel Lamon's libels upon Mr. Lincoln's memory is thus sufficiently disposed of, I proceed to consider the charges against his religious life and character. The best refutation of these charges lies on the pages of the book in which they are advanced. However skeptical Mr. Lincoln may have been in his earlier life, Mr. Lamon persists in asserting and attempting to prove that he continued a confirmed skeptic to the last: that he was an unbeliever in the truth of the Christian religion, and died an infidel; that, while "he was by no means free from a kind of belief in the supernatural, he rejected the great facts of Christianity as wanting the support of authentic evidence"; that, "during all the time of his residence at Springfield and in Washington, he never let fall from his lips an expression which remotely implied the slightest faith in Jesus Christ, as the Son of God and the Saviour of men"; that "he was at all times an infidel." From twenty-five to thirty pages of evidence is produced in proof of this allegation.

But all this positive statement as to Mr. Lincoln's persistent and final infidelity is contradicted by the admissions of the book itself. It is admitted that there did come a time in Mr. Lincoln's life at Springfield when he began to affiliate with Christian people, and to give his personal presence and support to the Church. It is admitted that he did so plausibly identify himself with the Christian community that "his New Salem associates and the aggressive deists with whom he originally united at Springfield gradually dispersed and fell away from his side."

Here is the fact, openly and squarely stated by Mr. Lamon, that Mr. Lincoln, even while at Springfield, did make such a change in his sentiments and bearing toward the Christian community, that "the aggressive deists and infidels with whom he originally united gradually dispersed and fell away from his side." He no sooner turned away from them in sentiment than they turned away from him in fact.

But how does the biographer attempt to explain this? How does he account for this admitted and observable change in Mr. Lincoln's life, that relieved him of the presence of so much aggressive deistical company? Why, by means of an explanation that kills the accusation itself—an explanation that fastens upon Mr. Lincoln the very charge of hypocrisy against which he professes to defend him. He accounts for this admitted and observable change in the attitude of Mr. Lincoln towards the Christian community, not by supposing that there was any sincerity about it, but by affirming that he was trying "to play a sharp game on the Christians of Springfield!" It was because "he was a wily politician, and did not disdain to regulate his religious manifestations with reference to his political interests"; and because, "seeing the immense and augmenting power of the churches, he aspired to lead the religious community, foreseeing that in order to his political success he must not appear an enemy within their gates." And yet, if we are to believe Colonel Lamon, he was an enemy all the while at heart; and while attending church, and supporting the Gospel, and making Sabbath school speeches, and speeches before the Bible Society, he was at heart a disbeliever of the truth and an antagonist of the cause which he professed to be supporting. In other words, he was all these years

playing the arrant hypocrite; deceiving the Christian community and wheedling it for political purposes; playing the role of a gospel hearer in the sanctuary, and a hail fellow well met with profane fellows of the baser sort in the private sanctum of infidelity or "aggressive deism."

Strangely enough, however, Colonel Lamon and his companion in authorship not only praise Mr. Lincoln's greatness, but laud his singular conscientiousness and integrity of motive almost to perfection. Says Mr. Herndon, "He was justly entitled to the appellation, Honest Abe"; "honesty was his pole star; conscience, the faculty that loves the just and the right, was the second great quality and *forte* of Mr. Lincoln's character." "He had a deep, broad, living conscience. His great reason told him what was true and good, right and wrong, just or unjust, and his conscience echoed back the decision, and it was from this point he spoke and wove his character and fame among us. His conscience ruled his heart." [See Herndon's letter in Carpenter's *Life of Lincoln*.]

In confirmation of this, Mr. Lamon goes on to show that Mr. Lincoln scorned everything like hypocrisy or deceit. In fact he makes his hero to be such a paragon of honesty and conscious integrity of motive that he would not undertake to plead a bad cause before a jury if he could possibly shift the responsibility over on to some other lawyer, whose conscience was not quite so tender. He brings in the testimony of a most reputable lawyer of another place in confirmation of this, who states: "That for a man who was for a quarter of a century both a lawyer and a politician, Mr. Lincoln was the most honest man I ever knew. He was not only morally honest but intellectually so. He could not reason

falsely; if he attempted it he failed. In politics he never would try to mislead. At the bar, when he thought he was wrong, he was the weakest lawyer I ever saw." "In a closely contested case where Mr. Lincoln had proved an account for a client, who was, though he knew it not, a very slippery fellow, the opposing attorney afterward proved a receipt clearly covering the entire case. By the time he was through Mr. Lincoln was missing. The court sent for him to the hotel. 'Tell the judge,' said Mr. Lincoln, 'that I can't come; my hands are dirty and I came over to clean them.'"

Page after page is thus taken to show Mr. Lincoln's singular conscientiousness and honesty, his incapability of hypocrisy or deceit, as a lawyer, a politician and a gentleman. And yet these consistent biographers go back on all this testimony of their own mouths when they come to explain the admitted change in his life when he began to lean toward the church, and the "aggressive deists" parted company with him. Then they find it convenient to call him a "wily politician," who is "playing a sharp game with the Christians"; "the cautious pretender who does not disdain to regulate his religious manifestations with reference to his political interests." They saddle upon him the vilest hypocrisy and deceit, and make him "act the liar's part," in order to send him down to posterity an infidel. On one page they reason that Mr. Lincoln could not have made any such admissions of his belief in the Christian religion as have been maintained, as such admissions would be contrary to his well-known character; on the next page they affirm that Mr. Lincoln could not act the hypocrite; and on a third they do not hesitate to attribute to him the very grossest duplicity, in their zeal to fasten on him the charge of permanent

skepticism. They go back on their own logic, eat their own argument, and give the lie to the very charge they are laboring with such considerable pains to establish.

The book, therefore, I repeat, bears on its own pages the best refutation of the charge it makes against Mr. Lincoln. Surely, such serious inconsistency of statement, such illogical absurdity, even, could hardly have escaped the notice of the biographers if some preconceived opinion had not prejudiced their minds and blinded their eyes. The *animus* of the book and the purpose for which it was written are only too apparent.

Perhaps it might suffice to rest the refutation of this charge against Mr. Lincoln's religious character on the internal evidence of Colonel Lamon's volume with which I have thus far been occupied. But there is something to be said concerning the authenticity and accuracy of the testimony by which the charge seems to be supported.

I have been amazed to find that the principal persons whose testimony is given in this book to prove that their old friend lived and died an infidel, never wrote a word of it, and never gave it as their opinion or allowed it to be published as covering their estimate of Mr. Lincoln's life and religious views. They were simply familiarly interviewed, and their testimony misrepresented, abridged and distorted to suit the purpose of the interviewer, and the business he had on hand.

The two gentlemen whose names are most relied upon, and who stand first on the list of witnesses to establish the charge these biographers have made, are the Hon. John T. Stuart, and Col. Jas. H.

Matheny, of Springfield, old and intimate friends of Mr. Lincoln.

Hon. John T. Stuart is an ex-member of Congress, and was Mr. Lincoln's first law partner,—a gentleman of the highest standing and ability in his profesion, and of unimpeachable integrity. Mr. Lamon has attributed to Mr. Stuart testimony the most disparaging and damaging to Mr. Lincoln's character and opinions,—testimony which Mr. Stuart utterly repudiates, both as to language and sentiment, as the following letter shows:—

SPRINGfiELD, Dec. 17th, 1872.

REV. J. A. REED:

DEAR SIR—My attention has been called to a statement in relation to the religious opinions of Mr. Lincoln, purporting to have been made by me and published in Lamon's *Life of Lincoln*. The language of that statement is not mine; it was not written by me, and I did not see it until it was in print.

I was once interviewed on the subject of Mr. Lincoln's religious opinions, and doubtless said that Mr. Lincoln was in the earlier part of his life an infidel. I could not have said that "Dr. Smith tried to convert Lincoln from infidelity so late as 1858, and couldn't do it." In relation to that point, I stated, in the same conversation, some facts which are omitted in that statement, and which I will briefly repeat. That Eddie, a

child of Mr. Lincoln, died in 1848 or 1849, and that he and his wife were in deep grief on that account. That Dr. Smith, then Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, at the suggestion of a lady friend of theirs, called upon Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln, and that first visit resulted in great intimacy and friendship between them, lasting till the death of Mr. Lincoln, and continuing with Mrs. Lincoln till the death of Dr. Smith. I stated that I had heard, at the time, that Dr. Smith and Mr. Lincoln had much discussion in relation to the truth of the Christian religion, and that Dr. Smith had furnished Mr. Lincoln with books to read on that subject, and among others one which had been written by himself, some time previous, on infidelity; and that Dr. Smith claimed that after this investigation Mr. Lincoln had changed his opinion, and become a believer in the truth of the Christian religion: that Mr. Lincoln and myself never conversed upon that subject, and I had no personal knowledge as to his alleged change of opinion. I stated, however, that it was certainly true, that up to that time Mr. Lincoln had never regularly attended any place of religious worship, but that after that time he rented a pew in the First Presbyterian Church, and with

> his family constantly attended the worship in that church until he went to Washington as President. This much I said at the time, and can now add that the Hon. Ninian W. Edwards, the brother-in-law of Mr. Lincoln, has, within a few days, informed me that when Mr. Lincoln commenced attending the First Presbyterian Church he admitted to him that his views had undergone the change claimed by Dr. Smith.
>
> I would further say that Dr. Smith was a man of very great ability and on theological and metaphysical subjects had few superiors and not many equals.
>
> Truthfulness was a prominent trait in Mr. Lincoln's character, and it would be impossible for any intimate friend of his to believe that he ever aimed to deceive, either by his words or his conduct.
>
> Yours truly,
> JOHN T. STUART.

Similar testimony, to the extent of a page or more of finely printed matter, Mr. Lamon attributes to Col. Jas. H. Matheny, of Springfield, Ill., an old acquaintance of Mr. Lincoln, an able lawyer and of high standing in the community. Mr. Matheny testifies that he never wrote a word of what is attributed to him; that it is not a fair representation of either his language or his opinions, and that he never would have allowed such an article to be

published as covering his estimate of Mr. Lincoln's life and character. Here is what this gentleman has to say, given over his own signature:—

SPRINGfiELD, Dec. 16th, 1872.

REV. J. A. REED:

DEAR SIR—The language attributed to me in Lamon's book is not from my pen. I did not write it, and it does not express my sentiments of Mr. Lincoln's entire life and character. It is a mere collection of sayings gathered from private conversations that were only true of Mr. Lincoln's earlier life. I would not have allowed such an article to be printed over my signature as covering my opinion of Mr. Lincoln's life and religious sentiments. While I do believe Mr. Lincoln to have been an infidel in his former life, when his mind was as yet unformed, and his associations principally with rough and skeptical men, yet I believe he was a very different man in later life; and that after associating with a different class of men, and investigating the subject, he was a firm believer in the Christian religion.

Yours truly,
JAS. H. MATHENY.

It is unnecessary that I occupy more space with the rest of the testimony, as there is none of it given over

the signature of anybody, save that which is given over the signature of W. H. Herndon. All aside from this bears evidence of having been manipulated to suit the purpose for which it is wanted, and is either contradictory, or fails to cover the whole of Mr. Lincoln's life. Judge Davis, for instance, is made to say: "I don't know anything about Lincoln's religion, nor do I think anybody else knows anything about it." Of what value can the testimony be that is prefaced with such declarations of knowing nothing about the matter?

John G. Nicolay is made to testify, that "to his knowledge Mr. Lincoln did not change his views after he came to Washington"; and yet he states in immediate connection that "he does not know what his views were, never having heard him explain them."

Jesse W. Fell either testifies, or is made to testify, to Mr. Lincoln's skeptical notions. And yet Mr. Fell admits that it "was eight or ten years previous to his death" that he believed him to be entertaining the views of which he speaks, "and that he *may have changed his sentiments* after his removal from among us." All this would be strange kind of testimony on which to convict Mr. Lincoln of murder in the presence of a judge and jury. But with such evidence it is sought to convict him of infidelity.

We are enabled to see, therefore, in the light of this revelation, of what "trustworthy materials" this book is composed; how much Mr. Lamon's "names and dates and authorities, by which he strengthens his testimony," are to be depended upon; and what reason unsuspecting or sympathizing critics and journalists have for arriving at the sage conclusion that Mr. Lincoln "was, in his habit of thought,

heterodox in the extreme to the close of his life, and a very different man from what he was supposed to be." The evidence of this book, so far as the prominent witnesses are concerned, and so far as it relates to the later years of Mr. Lincoln's life, is not only utterly untrustworthy, but even an ingenious and romantic invention.

Having shown what claims Mr. Lamon's book has to being the "only fair and reliable history" of Mr. Lincoln's life and views, and of what "trustworthy materials" it is composed, I shall now give the testimony I have collected to establish what has ever been the public impression, that Mr. Lincoln was in his later life, and at the time of his death, a firm believer in the truth of the Christian religion. The infidelity of his earlier life is not so much to be wondered at, when we consider the poverty of his early religious instruction and the peculiar influences by which he was surrounded. Gideon Welles, formerly Secretary of the Navy, in a recent article in the *Galaxy*, in accounting for the late and peculiar manifestation of faith which Mr. Lincoln exhibited, says: "It was doubtless to be attributed in a great measure to the absence of early religious culture—a want of educational advantages in his youthful frontier life." This, together with the fact that his youth and early manhood were spent chiefly among a rough, illiterate and skeptical class of people, is amply confirmed by Mr. Lamon's narrative.

On the same authority it appears that Mr. Lincoln had in his former life read but few books, and that everything he had read, of an intellectual character, bearing on the truth of the Bible, was of an infidel sort. It does not appear that he had ever seen, much less read, a work on the evidences of Christianity till

his interview with Rev. Dr. Smith in 1848. We hear of him as reading Paine, Voltaire and Theodore Parker, but nothing on the other side. The men by whom he was surrounded in his earlier life, it seems, kept him well supplied with their kind of literature. He was familiar with some of the master spirits of infidelity and theism, but had never grappled with the evidences of Christianity as presented by the great defenders of the Christian faith.

But then Mr. Lincoln's mind was of too much greatness and intellectual candor to remain the victim of a false theory in the presence of clear and sufficient intellectual testimony. And he no sooner, in the providence of God, was placed in possession of the truth, and led to investigate for himself, than he stood firmly and avowedly on the side of the Christian religion.

In proof of this statement, I first of all produce the testimony of Rev. Dr. Smith, Mr. Lincoln's pastor at Springfield. In relation to Mr. Lincoln's opinion of Dr. Smith, it is only necessary for me to state that he stood so high in his esteem, that he gave him the appointment of Consul to Glasgow. Dr. Smith was in Scotland at the time of Mr. Lincoln's death, and soon after this sad event, Mr. Herndon conceived the notion of collecting materials for his intended biography. He accordingly addressed a letter to Dr. Smith in Scotland, with the view of getting some information from so respectable a source to prove that Mr. Lincoln had died an infidel. In this however he was mistaken, to his evident chagrin and disappointment. I shall give some extracts from Dr. Smith's printed letter, which is to be found in the Springfield *Journal* of March, 1867, in which he gives his opinion of both Mr. Herndon and Mr. Lincoln.

EAST CAINNO, SCOTLAND, 24th Jan. 1867.

W. H. HERNDON, ESQ.:

SIR—Your letter of the 20th Dec. was duly received. In it you ask me to answer several questions in relation to the illustrious President Abraham Lincoln. With regard to your second question, I beg leave to say it is a very easy matter to prove that while I was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of v Springfield, Mr. Lincoln did avow his belief in the divine authority and inspiration of the Scriptures, and I hold that it is a matter of the last importance not only to the present, but all future generations of the Great Republic, and to all advocates of civil and religious liberty throughout the world, that this avowal on his part, and the circumstances attending it, together with very interesting incidents illustrative of the excellence of his character, in my possession, should be made known to the public. I am constrained, however, most respectfully to decline choosing you as the medium through which such a communication shall be made by me. [Omitting that portion of the letter which bears on Mr. Herndon, I give what is written in vindication of Mr. Lincoln.—J. A. R.] My

intercourse with Abraham Lincoln convinced me that he was not only an honest man, but preëminently an upright man—ever ready, so far as in his power, to render unto all their dues.

It was my honor to place before Mr. Lincoln arguments designed to prove the divine authority and inspiration of the Scriptures, accompanied by the arguments of infidel objectors in their own language. To the arguments on both sides Mr. Lincoln gave a most patient, impartial, and searching investigation. To use his own language, he examined the arguments as a lawyer who is anxious to reach the truth investigates testimony. The result was the announcement by himself that the argument in favor of the divine authority and inspiration of the Scriptures was unanswerable. I could say much more on this subject, but as you are the person addressed, for the present I decline. The assassin Booth, by his diabolical act, unwittingly sent the illustrious martyr to glory, honor, and immortality; but his false friend has attempted to send him down to posterity with infamy branded on his forehead, as a man who, notwithstanding all he suffered for his country's good, was destitute of those feelings and affections without

> which there can be no real excellency of character. Sir, I am with due respect your obedient servant,
>
> JAS. SMITH.
>
> N.B.—It will no doubt be gratifying to the friends of Christianity to learn that very shortly after Mr. Lincoln became a member of my congregation, at my request, in the presence of a large assembly at the annual meeting of the Bible Society of Springfield, he delivered an address the object of which was to inculcate the importance of having the Bible placed in possession of every family in the State. In the course of it he drew a striking contrast between the Decalogue and the moral codes of the most eminent lawgivers of antiquity, and closed (as near as I can recollect) in the following language: "It seems to me that nothing short of infinite wisdom could by any possibility have devised and given to man this excellent and perfect moral code. It is suited to men in all conditions of life and includes all the duties they owe to their Creator, to themselves, and to their fellow-men."
>
> J. S.

Mr. Lamon, aware of the importance of Dr. Smith's testimony, attempts to break the force of it by the

argumentum ad nauseam. He alludes to Dr. Smith as a gentleman of "slender abilities for the conversion of so distinguished a person, and as having in his zeal composed a heavy tract out of his own head to suit the particular case, and that he afterwards *drew* the acknowledgment from Mr. Lincoln that it was unanswerable," and that he himself is the only man that can testify of such an admission on the part of Mr. Lincoln. This is all the gratuitous assertion of a man who is driven to the wall for evidence to prove his point. Now John T. Stuart has already testified to Dr. Smith's abilities as a theologian and a metaphysician having few superiors. He testifies to the fact that Dr. Smith's work was not written to suit Mr. Lincoln's case. It was written previously, before Dr. Smith ever saw Mr. Lincoln. Nor is it true that Dr. Smith is the only one who can testify to an admission on the part of Mr. Lincoln of a change of sentiments. There are many residents of Springfield, both ladies and gentlemen, who can testify to this admission. I give one or two letters as a sample.

SPRINGfiELD, Dec. 24th, 1872.

REV. JAS. REED:

DEAR SIR—A short time after the Rev. Dr. Smith became pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in this city, Mr. Lincoln said to me, "I have been reading a work of Dr. Smith on the evidences of Christianity, and have heard him preach and converse on the subject, and I am now convinced of the truth of the Christian religion."

Yours truly,

N. W. EDWARDS.

SPRINGfiELD, Jan. 6th, 1873.

REV. J. A. REED:

DEAR SIR—Not long after Dr. Smith came to Springfield, and I think very near the time of his son's death, Mr. Lincoln said to me, that when on a visit somewhere, he had seen and partially read a work of Dr. Smith on the evidences of Christianity which had led him to change his views about the Christian religion; that he would like to get that work to finish the reading of it, and also to make the acquaintance of Dr. Smith. I was an elder in Dr. Smith's church, and took Dr. Smith to Mr. Lincoln's office and introduced him, and Dr. Smith gave Mr. Lincoln a copy of his book, as I know, at his own request.

Yours, &c.,
THOS. LEWIS.

There are many others who can testify that Mr. Lincoln, both publicly and privately while at Springfield, made the admission of his belief in the truth of the Christian religion. He did it in most unequivocal language, in addresses before the Bible Society and in Sabbath school.

I next refer to the testimony of Rev. Dr. Gurley, Mr. Lincoln's pastor at Washington City. Even if, before his election to the Presidency, Mr. Lincoln had entertained the sentiments attributed to him, after he

had reached the pinnacle of political elevation, there was certainly no necessity for him any longer to be "playing a sharp game with the Christians," and destroying his peace of mind by wearing the mask of hypocrisy. He was surely free now to worship where he felt most comfortable. But we no sooner find him in Washington than we find him settling down under the ministry of Dr. Gurley, a sound and orthodox minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Dr. Gurley was his intimate friend, and spiritual counselor and adviser, during the most trying and difficult time of his life. He was with him not only in the hours of his personal family bereavement, but when his heart was heavy and perplexed with the welfare of his country. Having been associated with Dr. Gurley in the charge of his pulpit for a time previous to his death, and being intimately acquainted with him, I have had the opportunity of knowing what his views of Mr. Lincoln's sentiments were. In the funeral oration which Dr. Gurley delivered in Washington, he says:

> "Probably since the days of Washington no man was ever so deeply and firmly embedded and enshrined in the hearts of the people as Abraham Lincoln. Nor was it a mistaken confidence and love. He deserved it—deserved it all. He merited it by his character, by his acts, and by the whole tone and tenor of his life.... His integrity was thorough, all-pervading, all-controlling and incorruptible. He saw his duty as the Chief Magistrate of a great and imperiled people, and he determined to do his duty,

> seeking the guidance, and leaning on the arm of Him of whom it is written: 'He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.'
>
> "Never shall I forget the emphatic and deep emotion with which he said in this very room, to a company of clergymen who called to pay their respects to him in the darkest days of our civil conflict: 'Gentlemen, my hope of success in this struggle rests on that immutable foundation, the justness and the goodness of God; and when events are very threatening I shall hope that in some way all will be well in the end, because our cause is just and God will be on our side.'"

This was uttered when Dr. Gurley was not aware, as I suppose, that Mr. Lincoln had ever been charged with entertaining infidel sentiments. While sitting in the study one day with him, conversing on Mr. Lincoln's character, I asked him about the rumor of his infidelity then being circulated by Mr. Herndon. He said, "I do not believe a word of it. It could not have been true of him while here, for I have had frequent and intimate conversations with him on the subject of the Bible and the Christian religion, when he could have had no motive to deceive me, and I considered him sound not only on the truth of the Christian religion but on all its fundamental doctrines and teaching. And more than that: in the latter days of his chastened and weary life, after the death of his son Willie, and his visit to the battlefield

of Gettysburg, he said, with tears in his eyes, that he had lost confidence in everything but God, and that he now believed his heart was changed, and that he loved the Saviour, and if he was not deceived in himself, it was his intention soon to make a profession of religion." Language to this effect Mr. Lincoln, it appears, used in conversation with other persons, and I refer next to the corroborating testimony of Noah Brooks, Esq., now associated with the New York *Tribune*. This gentleman has already published most interesting testimony in relation to Mr. Lincoln's religious sentiments in *Harper's Monthly* of July, 1865. In order that his testimony may be fully appreciated, I will here state, on the authority of a mutual friend, that "Mr. Brooks is himself an earnest Christian man, and had the appointment of private secretary to the President, to which office he would have acceded had Mr. Lincoln lived. He was so intimate with the President that he visited him socially at times when others were refused admission, took tea with the family, spending evenings with him, reading to him, and conversing with him freely on social and religious topics, and in my opinion knows more of the secret inner life and religious views of Mr. Lincoln, at least during the term of his presidency, than any man living." The following is a letter which I have received from Mr. Brooks in relation to his views of Mr. Lincoln's religious sentiments:

NEW YORK, Dec. 31st, 1872.

REV. J. A. REED:

MY DEAR SIR—In addition to what has appeared from my pen, I will state that I have had many conversations with Mr. Lincoln,

which were more or less of a religious character, and while I never tried to draw anything like a statement of his views from him, yet he freely expressed himself to me as having "a hope of blessed immortality through Jesus Christ." His views seemed to settle so naturally around that statement, that I considered no other necessary. His language seemed not that of an inquirer, but of one who had a prior settled belief in the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion. Once or twice, speaking to me of the change which had come upon him, he said, while he could not fix any definite time, yet it was after he came here, and I am very positive that in his own mind he identified it with about the time of Willie's death. He said, too, that after he went to the White House he kept up the habit of daily prayer. Sometimes he said it was only ten words, but those ten words he had. There is no possible reason to suppose that Mr. Lincoln would ever deceive me as to his religious sentiments. In many conversations with him, I absorbed the firm conviction that Mr. Lincoln was at heart a Christian man, believed in the Saviour, and was seriously considering the step which would formally connect him with the visible Church on earth.

> Certainly, any suggestion as to Mr. Lincoln's skepticism or infidelity, to me who knew him intimately from 1862 till the time of his death, is a monstrous fiction—a shocking perversion.
>
> Yours truly,
> NOAH BROOKS.

The following extract I add also from Mr. Brooks's article in *Harper's Monthly* of July, 1865: "There was something touching in his childlike and simple reliance on Divine aid, especially when in such extremities as he sometimes fell into; then, though prayer and reading the Scriptures was his constant habit, he more earnestly than ever sought that strength which is promised when mortal help faileth. He said once, 'I have been many times driven to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for that day.' At another time he said,

> 'I am very sure that if I do not go away from here a wiser man, I shall go away a better man for having learned here what a very poor sort of a man I am.'"

Mr. Carpenter, author of *Six Months in the White House*, whose intimacy with Mr. Lincoln gives importance to his testimony, says that "he believed Mr. Lincoln to be a sincere Christian," and among other proofs of it gives another well-authenticated admission (made by Mr. Lincoln to an estimable lady of Brooklyn, laboring in the Christian Commission)

of a change of heart, and of his intention at some suitable opportunity to make a profession of religion.

Mr. Newton Bateman, Superintendent of Public Instruction in the State of Illinois, a gentleman of rare literary attainments, and of unquestionable veracity, has given very important testimony in relation to one particular point, more especially, Mr. Lincoln's belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ. Both Mr. Herndon and Mr. Lamon persist in asserting that Mr. Lincoln never used the name of Jesus Christ except to deny His divinity, and that Mr. Bateman is "the sole and only man who dare say that Mr. Lincoln believed Jesus Christ to be the Son of God."

Mr. Bateman testifies that in 1860, Mr. Lincoln in conversation with him used the following language: "I know that there is a God, and that He hates injustice and slavery. I see the storm coming, and I know that His hand is in it. If He has a place and a work for me, and I think He has, I believe I am ready. I am nothing, but truth is everything. I know I am right, because I know that liberty is right, for Christ teaches it and Christ is God. I have told them a house divided against itself cannot stand; and Christ and reason say the same, and they will find it so," &c. This testimony was originally given in Holland's *Life of Lincoln*. Mr. Herndon, at first unwilling to impeach Mr. Bateman's veracity, suggests a doubt "whether he is correctly reported in Holland's history"; presently, however, summoning courage, he ventures the affirmation: "On my word the world may take it for granted that Holland is wrong; that he does not state Mr. Lincoln's views correctly." He then goes on to say that "between himself and Dr. Holland, Mr. Bateman is not in a very pleasant situation." We have seen, however, that Mr.

Herndon's "word," in a matter where his prejudices are so violent and his convictions so obstinate, is hardly a sufficient denial with which to oppose the deliberate and unretracted statement of an intelligent and reputable witness. And Mr. Bateman has no need to be disturbed, so long as the "unpleasantness" of his situation is occasioned by no more serious discomfort than Mr. Herndon's unsupported contradiction. As the matter now stands, Mr. Herndon offers a denial, based on general impressions as to Mr. Lincoln's character, against the direct, specific, and detailed testimony of a careful and competent man as to what he heard with his own ears. Mr. Herndon simply did not hear what Mr. Bateman did hear; and is in the position of that Irishman on trial for his life, who, when one witness swore directly that he saw the accused commit the crime, proposed to put upon the stand a dozen witnesses who could swear they did *not* see him.

Mr. Lamon also states that Mr. Bateman is a respectable citizen, whose general reputation for truth and veracity is not to be impeached, but his story, as reported in Holland's *Life of Lincoln*, is so inconsistent with Mr. Lincoln's whole character that it must be rejected as altogether incredible. Unfortunately, however, for Mr. Lamon, he has not so impressed us with the trustworthy nature of the materials of his own book, as that we can afford to distrust the honesty and integrity of either Dr. Holland or Mr. Bateman for his sake. If anybody's story of Mr. Lincoln's life and sentiments is to be "rejected as inconsistent and altogether incredible," the testimony thus far would seem to indicate that it is Mr. Lamon's story. At least that is the "unpleasant situation" in which we shall leave the matter, so far as Mr. Bateman and Dr. Holland are concerned in it.

But Mr. Bateman is not the only one who can testify that Mr. Lincoln did use the name of the Saviour, and believed him to be the Christ of God. I have given several instances already in which he used the name of Christ as his Saviour, and avowed that he loved Him. Moreover, he could not have avowed his belief in the truth of the Christian religion, as many witnesses testify, if he did not believe Jesus to be the Christ of God.

To the various testimony which we have thus far cited it only remains for me to add the testimony of his own lips. In his address to the colored people of Baltimore, on the occasion of the presentation of a copy of the Bible, Mr. Lincoln said: "In regard to this great Book, I have only to say, it is the best gift which God has ever given to man. All the good from the Saviour of the world is communicated to us through this Book."

To the Hon. H. C. Deming, of Connecticut, he said that the "article of his faith was contained in the Saviour's condensed statement of both law and gospel—'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself.'"

Mr. Herndon affirms that Mr. Lincoln did not believe in the "Christian dogma of the forgiveness of sin": he believed that "God would not and could not forgive sin. He did not believe in forgiveness through Christ, nor in fact in any doctrine of forgiveness. In reading Mr. Lincoln's proclamations, however, we find that he does very distinctly recognize the doctrine of the forgiveness of sin on the part of God, and very earnestly implores the people to seek the forgiveness of their sins. In his proclamation of a fast day,

August, 1861, are these words:

"And, whereas, it is fit and becoming in all people, at all times, to acknowledge and revere the supreme government of God; to bow in humble submission to his chastisements; to confess and deplore their sins and transgressions, in the full conviction that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to pray with all fervency and contrition for the *pardon* of their past offenses, and for a blessing on their present and prospective action," etc.

Read also his proclamation enforcing the observance of the Christian Sabbath in the Army and Navy, and ask yourself, Could an infidel have done this?

> The President, Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, desires and enjoins the orderly observance of the Sabbath by the officers and men in the military and naval service. The importance for man and beast of the prescribed weekly rest, the sacred rights of Christian soldiers and sailors, a becoming deference to the best sentiment of a Christian people, and a due regard for the Divine will, demand that Sunday labor in the Army and Navy be reduced to the measure of a strict necessity. The discipline and character of the National forces should not suffer, nor the cause they defend be imperiled, by the profanation of the day and the name of the Most High. At this time of public distress, adopting the words of Washington in 1776, "Men may find enough to do

> in the service of God and their country without abandoning themselves to vice and immorality." The first general order issued by the Father of his Country, after the Declaration of Independence, indicates the spirit in which our institutions were founded and should ever be defended: "The General hopes and trusts that every officer and man will endeavor to live and act as becomes a Christian soldier defending the dearest rights and liberties of his country."
>
> ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Besides all this, we find Mr. Lincoln often using the very language of the Saviour, as not only expressing but giving the sanction of Divine authority to his own views and opinions. What a remarkable instance of it in the solemn words that fell from his lips in his last inaugural, as he stood on the steps of the Capitol! Standing upon the verge of his grave, as he was that day, and addressing his last official words to his countrymen, his lips touched as with the finger of inspiration, he said:

"The Almighty has His own purposes. 'Woe unto the world because of offenses, for it must needs be that offenses will come; but woe unto the man by whom the offense cometh.' If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of these offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those

by whom the offense came, shall we discern any departure therein from those Divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that the mighty scourge of war may pass away. Yet if God will that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid with another drawn by the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so must it still be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"

Thus it appears, that whether Mr. Lincoln was ever accustomed to blaspheme the name of Jesus Christ or not, or whether he was ever accustomed to deny His divinity or not, as his defamers allege, he is willing, in the last eventful days of his life, standing at the nation's Capitol, in the hearing of the swelling multitude that hangs upon his lips, to use the sanction of Divine authority to one of the most remarkable sentences of his official address.

Hon. Isaac N. Arnold, of Chicago, an intimate acquaintance of Mr. Lincoln, and who is engaged in a review of his work on Mr. Lincoln's life, writes me that "from the time he left Springfield, with the touching request for the prayers of his friends and neighbors, to the day of his death, his words were the words of a Christian, revering the Bible, and obeying its precepts. A spirit of reverence and deep religious feeling pervades nearly all the public utterances and state papers of his later life."

The following interesting testimony from Rev. Dr. Byron Sunderland, of the First Presbyterian Church of Washington City, gives us a little insight into the philosophy of Mr. Lincoln's mind and religious

sentiments:

WASHINGTON CITY, Nov. 15th, 1872.

REV. JAS. A. REED:

DEAR BRO.—It was in the last days of 1862, about the time Mr. Lincoln was seriously contemplating the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation, that I, in company with some friends of the President, called upon him. After some conversation, in which he seemed disposed to have his joke and fun, he settled down to a serious consideration of the subject before his mind, and for one half-hour poured forth a volume of the deepest Christian philosophy I ever heard. He began by saying—

"The ways of God are mysterious and profound beyond all comprehension —'who by searching can find Him out?' Now, judging after the manner of men, taking counsel of our sympathies and feelings, if it had been left to us to determine it, we would have had no war. And going further back to the occasion of it, we would have had no slavery. And tracing it still further back, we would have had no evil. There is the mystery of the universe which no man can solve, and it is at that point that the human understanding

utterly backs down. And then there is nothing left but for the heart of man to take up faith and believe and trust where it cannot reason. Now, I believe we are all agents and instruments of Divine providence. On both sides we are working out the will of God; yet how strange the spectacle! Here is one half the nation prostrated in prayer that God will help them to destroy the Union and build up a government upon the cornerstone of human bondage. And here is the other half equally earnest in their prayers and efforts to defeat a purpose which they regard as so repugnant to their ideas of human nature and the rights of society, as well as liberty and independence. They want slavery; we want freedom. They want a servile class; we want to make equality practical as far as possible. And they are Christians, and we are Christians. They and we are praying and fighting for results exactly the opposite. What must God think of such a posture of affairs? There is but one solution—self-deception. Somewhere there is a fearful heresy in our religion, and I cannot think it lies in the love of liberty and in the aspirations of the human soul.

"What I am to do in the present emergency time will determine. I hold myself in my present position

and with the authority vested in me as an instrument of Providence. I have my own views and purposes, I have my convictions of duty, and my notions of what is right to be done. But I am conscious every moment that all I am and all I have is subject to the control of a Higher Power, and that Power can use me or not use me in any manner, and at any time, as in His wisdom and might may be pleasing to Him.

"Nevertheless, I am no fatalist. I believe in the supremacy of the human conscience, and that men are responsible beings; that God has a right to hold them, and will hold them, to a strict personal account for the deeds done in the body. But, sirs, I do not mean to give you a lecture upon the doctrines of the Christian religion. These are simply with me the convictions and realities of great and vital truths, the power and demonstration of which I see now in the light of this our national struggle as I have never seen before. God only knows the issue of this business. He has destroyed nations from the map of history for their sins. Nevertheless my hopes prevail generally above my fears for our own Republic. The times are dark, the spirits of ruin are abroad in all their power, and the mercy of God alone can save us."

> So did the President discourse until we felt we were imposing on his time, and rising we took our leave of him, confident that he would be true to those convictions of right and duty which were derived from so deep a Christian philosophy.
>
> Yours truly,
> BYRON SUNDERLAND.

The Rev. Dr. Miner, Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Springfield, who was intimately acquainted with Mr. Lincoln, and visited him and his family in Washington previous to his death, has left most interesting testimony in reference to Mr. Lincoln's religious sentiments, confirmatory of what has been given, and which is preserved in the archives of the University of Chicago. Dr. Miner sums up his impressions of Mr. Lincoln as follows: "All that was said during that memorable afternoon I spent alone with that great and good man is engraven too deeply on my memory ever to be effaced. I felt certain of this fact, that if Mr. Lincoln was not really an experimental Christian, he was acting like one. He was doing his duty manfully, and looking to God for help in time of need; and, like the immortal Washington, he believed in the efficacy of prayer, and it was his custom to read the Scriptures and pray himself." And here I would relate an incident which occurred on the 4th of March, 1861, as told me by Mrs. Lincoln. Said she: "Mr. Lincoln wrote the conclusion of his inaugural address the morning it was delivered. The family being present, he read it to them. He then said he wished to be left alone for a short time. The family retired to an adjoining room, but not so far distant but that the voice of prayer

could be distinctly heard. There, closeted with God alone, surrounded by the enemies who were ready to take his life, he commended his country's cause and all dear to him to God's providential care, and with a mind calmed with communion with his Father in heaven, and courage equal to the danger, he came forth from that retirement ready for duty."

With such testimony, gathered from gentlemen of the highest standing, and much more that I could add to confirm it, I leave the later life and religious sentiments of Abraham Lincoln to the dispassionate and charitable judgment of a grateful people. While it is to be regretted that Mr. Lincoln was not spared to indicate his religious sentiments by a profession of his faith in accordance with the institutions of the Christian religion, yet it is very clear that he had this step in view, and was seriously contemplating it, as a sense of its fitness and an apprehension of his duty grew upon him. He did not ignore a relation to the Christian church as an obsolete duty and an unimportant matter. How often do we hear him thanking God for the churches! And he was fast bringing his life into conformity to the Christian standard. The coarse story-telling of his early days was less indulged in in his later life. Hon. Isaac N. Arnold, and Mr. Carpenter, as well as Mr. Lincoln's physician at Washington, Dr. Stone, all testify that "while his stories and anecdotes were racy, witty, and pointed beyond all comparison," yet they "never heard one of a character needing palliation or excuse." His physician, Dr. Stone, testifies that "Mr. Lincoln was the purest-hearted man he ever came in contact with."

His disposition to attend the theater in later life (if to anyone it seems to need apology) was not so much a

fondness for the playhouse as a relief from his mental anxiety, and an escape from the incessant pressure of visitors at the White House. "It is a well-known fact," says Dr. Miner, "that he would not have been at the theater on that fatal night, but to escape the multitude who were that evening pressing into the White House to shake hands with him. It has been said that Mrs. Lincoln urged her husband to go to the theater against his will. This is not true. On the contrary, she tried to persuade him not to go, but he insisted. He said, 'I must have a little rest. A large and overjoyed, excited people will visit me tonight. My arms are lame by shaking hands with the multitude, and the people will pull me to pieces.' He went to the theater, not because he was interested in the play, but because he was care-worn and needed quiet and repose. Mrs. Lincoln informed me that he seemed to take no notice of what was going on in the theater from the time he entered it till the discharge of the fatal pistol. She said that the last day he lived was the happiest of his life. The very last moments of his conscious life were spent in conversation with her about his future plans, and what he wanted to do when his term of office expired. He said he wanted to visit the Holy Land and see the places hallowed by the footprints of the Saviour. He was saying there was no city he so much desired to see as *Jerusalem*; and with that word half spoken on his tongue, the bullet of the assassin entered his brain, and the soul of the great and good President was carried by angels to the New Jerusalem above."

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APPENDIX V

TWO HERNDON LETTERS CONCERNING LINCOLN'S RELIGION

BRIEF ANALYSIS OF LINCOLN'S CHARACTER

SPRINGFIELD, ILL., Sept. 10, 1887.

J. E. REMSBURG, Oak Mills, Kansas.

FRIEND REMSBURG: Today I send you Speed's lecture on "Lincoln," which you can keep till I send for it—and this will probably be never. It is a very poor lecture if the lecture contains his knowledge of Lincoln, and, I guess it does. It shows no insight into Lincoln at all, though it is well enough written. It is said that Speed had a world of influence over Lincoln. This may be so, and yet I never saw it. It is said by Nicolay and Hay that Lincoln poured out his soul to Speed. Bah! Nonsense! Probably, except in his love scrapes, Lincoln never poured out his soul to any mortal creature at any time and on no subject. He was the most secretive, reticent, shut-mouthed man that ever existed.

You had to *guess* at the man after years of acquaintance and then you must look long and keenly before you *guessed*, or you would make an ass of yourself.

You had to take some leading—great leading and well-established—fact of Lincoln's nature and then follow it by accurate and close analysis wherever it went.

This process would lead you correctly if you knew human nature and its laws. Lincoln was a mystery to the world; he loved principle, but moved ever just to suit his own ends; he was a trimmer among men, though firm on laws and great principles; he did not care for men; they were his tools and instruments; he was a cool man—an unsocial one—an abstracted one, having the very quintessence of the profoundest policies. Lincoln's heart was tender, full of mercy, if in his presence some imaginative man presented the subject to him. "Out of sight, out of mind" may truthfully be said of Lincoln. If I am correct, what do you think of the stories afloat about what Lincoln said in relation to his religion, especially said to strangers? I send you two "Truth-Seekers" which you will please read where I speak of Lincoln in three letters, pages marked at the top. You will learn something of Lincoln's nature in those three letters of mine—two of them on Lincoln's religion, and one to a minister. Please read them. There are some quotations in these letters which I have never had time to send you as I recollect it. They are good things—one on Laws of Human Nature and one on the Pride-Haughtiness of Christians. Lincoln delivered a lecture in which these quotations are to be found. I heard him deliver it.

W. H. HERNDON.

P. S.—Mr. Speed was my boss for three or four years and Lincoln, Speed, Hurst, and I slept in the same room for a year or so. I was clerk for Speed. Speed could make Lincoln do much about simple measures, policies, not involving any principle. Beyond this power Speed did not have much influence over Lincoln nor did anyone else.

A CARD AND A CORRECTION

I wish to say a few short words to the public and private ear. About the year 1870 I wrote a letter to F. E. Abbott, then of Ohio, touching Mr. Lincoln's religion. In that letter I stated that Mr. Lincoln was an infidel, sometimes bordering on atheism, and I now repeat the same. In the year 1873 the Right Rev. James A. Reed, pastor and liar of this city, gave a lecture on Mr. Lincoln's religion, in which he tried to answer some things which I never asserted, except as to Mr. Lincoln's infidelity, which I did assert and now and here affirm. Mr. Lincoln was an infidel of the radical type; he never mentioned the name of Jesus except to scorn and detest the idea of miraculous conception. This lecture of the withered minister will be found in Holland's Review [*Scribner's Monthly*]. I answered this lecture in 1874, I think, in this city to a large and intelligent audience—had it printed and sent a copy to Holland, requesting, in polite language, that he insert it in his Review as an answer to the Reed lecture. The request was denied me, as a matter of course. He could help to libel a man with Christian courage, and with Christian cowardice refuse to unlibel him.

Soon thereafter, say from 1874 to 1882, I saw floating around in the newspaper literature, such charges as "Herndon is in a lunatic asylum, well chained," "Herndon is a pauper," "Herndon is a drunkard," "Herndon is a vile infidel and a knave, a liar and a drunkard," and the like. I have contradicted all these things under my own hand, often, except as to my so-called infidelity, liberalism, free religious opinions, or what-not. In the month of October, 1882, I saw in and clipped out of the Cherryvale *Globe-News* of September, 1882, a paper published in the State of Kansas, the following rich

and racy article; it is as follows:

"*Lincoln's Old Law Partner a Pauper*

"Bill Herndon is a pauper in Springfield, Ill. He was once worth considerable property. His mind was the most argumentative of any of the old lawyers in the State, and his memory was extraordinary. For several years before Lincoln was nominated for the Presidency, Herndon was in some respects the most active member of the firm, preparing the greatest number of cases for trial and making elaborate arguments in their behalf. It is said that he worked hard with Lincoln in preparing the memorable speeches by the man who afterward became President, during the debates between Lincoln and Douglas in 1858, and in constructing the Cooper Union address delivered by Lincoln a short time before the war. Herndon, with all his attainments, was a man who now and then went on a spree, and it was no uncommon thing for him to leave an important lawsuit and spend several days in drinking and carousing. This habit became worse after Lincoln's death, and like poor Dick Yates, Herndon went down step by step till his old friends and associates point to him as a common drunkard."

There are three distinct charges in the above article. First, that I am a pauper. Second, that I am a common drunkard, and third, that I was a traitor or false to my clients. Let me answer these charges in their order. First, I am not a pauper. Never have been and expect never to be. I am working on my farm, making my own living with my own muscle and brain, a place and a calling that even Christianity with its persecution and malignity can never reach me to do much harm. I had, it is true, once a considerable property, but lost much of it in the crash and consequent crisis of 1873, caused in part by the contraction of the currency, in part by the decline in the demand for the agricultural products which I raise for sale, in part by the inability by the people to buy, etc., etc., and for no other reasons.

Second, I never was a common drunkard, as I look at it, and am not now. I am and have been for years an ardent and enthusiastic temperance man, though opposed to prohibition by law, by any force or other choker. The time has not come for this. It is a fact that I once, years ago, went on a spree; and this I now deeply regret. It however is in the past, and let a good life in the future bury the past. I have not fallen, I have risen, and all good men and women will applaud the deed, always excepting a small, little, bitter Christian like the Right Rev. pastor and liar of this city, to whom I can trace some of the above charges. In my case this minister was an eager, itching libeler, and what he said of me is false—nay, a willful lie.

Third, I never was a traitor or untrue to my clients or their interests. I never left them during the progress of a trial or at other times for the cause alleged, drunkenness. I may have crept—slid—out of a case

during the trial because I had no faith in it, leaving Mr. Lincoln, who had faith in it, to run it through. My want of faith in a case would have been discovered by the jury and that discovery would have damaged my client and to save my client I dodged. This is all there is on it, and let men make the most of it.

Now, let me ask a question. Why is all this libeling of me? I am a mere private citizen, hold no office, do not beg the people to give me one often. My religious ideas, views, and philosophy are today, here, unpopular. But wait, I will not deny my ideas, views, or philosophy for office or station or the applause of the unthinking multitude. I can, however, answer the above question. It, the libeling, is done because I did assert and affirm by oral language and by print that Mr. Lincoln was an infidel, sometimes bordering on atheism, and yet he was among the best, greatest, and noblest of mankind; he was a grand man. Why do not the Christians prove that Mr. Lincoln was an evangelical Christian and thus prove me a liar? One of my friends, for whom I have great respect, says, that "Mr. Lincoln was a *rational* Christian because he believed in morality." Why not say Lincoln was *rational* Buddhist, as Buddhism teaches morality? Why not say Lincoln was *rational* Mohammedan? By the way, let me say here, that I have a profound respect for an earnest, manly, and sincere Christian or an Atheist, a profound respect for an earnest, manly, and sincere Infidel or theist or any other religion, or the men who hold it, when that belief is woven into a great manly character to beautify and greaten the world.

These charges, and I do not know how many more, nor of what kind, have been scattered broadcast all

over the land, and have gone into every house, have been read at every fireside till the good people believe them, believe that I am nearly as mean as a little Christian, and all because I told the truth and stand firm in my conviction. Respectfully,

W. H. HERNDON.

November 9, 1882.

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APPENDIX VI

THE IRWIN ARTICLE WITH LETTERS CONCERNING LINCOLN'S RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Another Valuable Contribution to the History of the Martyr
President.—Was Abraham Lincoln an Infidel?—A Painstaking
Examination of the Case by An Old Acquaintance.—Important
Testimony of Contemporaneous Witnesses.—History of the Famous Manuscript of 1833.—Mentor Graham Says It Was a Defence of Christianity.—The Burned Manuscript
Quite a Different Affair.—The Charge of Infidelity in 1848, Said to Have Been Disproved at the Time.—Letter of
Hon. Wm. Reid, U. S. Consul at Dundee, Scotland.

By B. F. IRWIN

PLEASANT PLAINS, ILL., April 20, 1874.

EDITOR STATE JOURNAL: For some time, I believe, in 1870 there has been a constant and continued effort upon the part of the Hon. W. H. Herndon, Springfield, Ill., to convince and prove to the world that Abraham Lincoln lived and died an infidel. He has succeded, as I suppose, in proving that proposition to his own entire satisfaction and probably to the satisfaction of some others. The last effort I have noticed upon the subject was Herndon's reply to the Rev. J. A. Reed, in a lecture delivered in

the court house in Springfield, some months ago. A few days after that lecture was delivered, I was urgently requested by a prominent minister of the gospel and friend of Lincoln's (and also a lady friend now residing in Kansas) to review that speech. I promised each of those persons I would do so at the proper time. That time has now arrived, and I propose noticing a few points in the address of Mr. Herndon,

"THE RELIGION OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN"

also a point or two in his Abbott letter and I think I will be able to show that Mr. Herndon, himself, never knew or understood really what the faith of Lincoln was or what the

RELIGIOUS BELIEF OF LINCOLN

was. I wish it now and here understood that Mr. Herndon's candor or veracity I do not call in question. Nor will I designedly say anything to offend him. He and I have been for twenty-five years good personal friends, and I hope that friendship may continue. Mr. Herndon has a right to prove Mr. Lincoln an infidel if he can. I claim the same right to prove that

LINCOLN WAS NOT AN INFIDEL

if I can. If Mr. Lincoln was an infidel, as Herndon says, it is proper for the world to know it. If he was not an infidel the charge is wrong and a slander, for infidelity in the nineteenth century is no honor to any man, dead or alive.

Mr. Herndon, in his speech, uses this language: "One side of this question can be proved. It is admitted on all hands that Lincoln once was an infidel; that he wrote a small book, or essay, or pamphlet against Christianity, and that he (Lincoln) continued an

unbeliever until late in life." Herndon further says: "It is a rule of law, as well as a rule of common sense, that when a certain state or condition of affairs is once proved to exist, the presumption is, that it still exists until the contrary is proved." Now I stand by that proposition as a true one. Will Mr. Herndon do so? But

HE IS WOEFULLY MISTAKEN

in his statement that "all admit that Lincoln was once an infidel." I have never yet heard one single man express the belief that Lincoln was an infidel, either early or late in life, while I am confident I have heard one hundred different persons express astonishment at Mr. Herndon writing and publishing Lincoln to the world an infidel. Mr. Herndon, it is true, did have opportunities and advantages over others in knowing Mr. Lincoln's religious opinions. But other men had some opportunities as well as Mr. Herndon, and to them I shall have to appeal, for I do not claim to personally know anything about Mr. Lincoln's religious faith. Though personally acquainted with Lincoln for twenty-five years, and often in his office, I never heard him say a word on the subject of Christianity or religious belief. Hence, my opinion of Lincoln's faith or belief is based on the testimony of those who do know, who had it

FROM LINCOLN HIMSELF;

and I believe them, for the weight of testimony is certainly against Mr. Herndon. The Scriptures of Truth lay it down as a Divine rule, that the evidence of two or three witnesses is better than one. Common law lays down the same rule, borrowed from Divine authority, and our courts are governed by it in their decisions.

Mr. Herndon, in his

REPLY TO MR. REED,

says, "He is talking to establish the truth of a controversy between those who hold that Lincoln was a disbeliever, and those who hold that he died a Christian (a believer in Christ)" and then says: "If I fail to establish my point it will be because of the manner and method of presenting the facts." I have read that lecture carefully over, and I fail to find any proof of Herndon's proposition that Lincoln ever was an infidel or an unbeliever. The nearest I see to it, is the

STATEMENT OF J. H. MATHENY

He uses this language, substantially: "Mr. Lincoln's earlier life is his whole life and history in Illinois up to the time he left for Washington City. He (Lincoln) was, as I understand it, a confirmed infidel." Now, Matheny fails to tell us how he got that understanding. Did he get it from Lincoln? He don't say so, and the reason he don't say so doubtless is, he got it from some other source—probably from Herndon. But clearly, to be of any weight as evidence, he must have that understanding from Mr. Lincoln himself. Mr. Matheny may have some time in life heard Lincoln use some of the

ARGUMENTS OF TOM PAINE,

or advance infidel ideas, and still not be an infidel. I have heard an official member of the Methodist Church in this town advance as strong infidel sentiments as Tom Paine ever did, and you would insult the man to say he was an infidel. So any Christian may use the language or advance some of the sentiments of Tom Paine and be far from an infidel. Lincoln may have done all that, and still not be an infidel. I do not believe Mr. Lincoln ever was an infidel, and I can truly state and say just what

Matheny said. I understood Lincoln was an infidel, but I never believed the statement true. Matheny understood it: in other words, he had heard it but knew nothing about the facts in the case. I have seen Mr. Matheny since, and he states that he

NEVER HAD IT FROM LINCOLN

that he was an infidel, and he never believed it.

If Mr. Herndon is in possession of the evidence, in writing or otherwise, to prove that Lincoln was an infidel, either earlier or later in life, he ought to bring forward the proof to sustain his proposition: for he has long since learned that the statement alone fails to satisfy the public mind that Lincoln ever was an infidel. Mr. Herndon in his

ABBOTT LETTER

truly says the charge of infidelity was made against Mr. Lincoln when he was a candidate for Congress in 1848; and then adds: "Mr. Lincoln did not deny the charge, because it was true." The charge of infidelity was made against Lincoln at that time, and I suppose Lincoln made no public denial of the charge, for the reason that the canvass was being made on political grounds, and not religious faith or belief. This much was said at the time, as I well remember to be the facts in the case.

About the time of building the flatboat on the Sangamon River in 1830, when Lincoln was quite a young man, a

RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY

was the topic in which Lincoln took a part; and in the argument Lincoln used the language that, according to the history of the case, in the New Testament, Christ was a bastard and his mother a base woman. This he may have used at the time, as

young men sometimes do use vain language, and seventeen years afterward, when he was a candidate for Congress against

PETER CARTWRIGHT

a Methodist preacher, that vain remark was remembered, and Tom Paine having used similar language, Lincoln was published in some of the papers as an infidel. The above was the explanation published at the time, and the charge of infidelity did no harm. Had Lincoln been known as an infidel, or believed to be one at that time, I am certain he would have been beaten badly by Cartwright in the canvass.

Again, Mr. Herndon, in his Abbott letter (I believe it is), says: "It is not to be found in print that Lincoln ever used the word Christ." In fact, Herndon says, "he never did use it, only to deny Christ as the son of God." Now that statement may be true, that he did not use the term Christ: but if Mr. Herndon will examine the speeches of the public men of this nation, I believe I am safe in saying that Mr. Lincoln used and

QUOTED MORE SCRIPTURE

than any man in the nation; and that he quoted the parables and language of Christ oftener than any public man living. Not only did Lincoln quote Scripture, but he used it as being of Divine authority, and applicable to the affairs of earth. Mr. Herndon gives us to understand that Lincoln did not believe the New Testament Scriptures to be any more inspired than Homer's songs, Milton's "Paradise Lost," or Shakspeare. If Herndon is correct, it seems strange Lincoln made no use of those books. On the 16th of January, 1858,[74] as a foundation for an argument,

he used the language of Christ

"A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF CANNOT STAND,"

in reply to Douglas. In the same campaign he four times used the parables of Christ; in his second inaugural address—"woe unto the world because of its offenses"—Christ's language, again.

But I need not multiply quotations. His speeches, proclamations, and messages are so full of quotations of scripture, always the language of Christ himself, that if an angel of light should proclaim it trumpet-tongued from the skies, that Lincoln was an unbeliever in Christ, I could not believe it. He could not have been an infidel without being a base hypocrite; and I don't believe a more honest man lived on earth.

THE EVIDENCE

Now I will take up some evidence on the question being discussed. Mr. Herndon has said that, in Lincoln's early life, he wrote

A PAMPHLET

book, or manuscript against Christianity. I propose to show that the manuscript written by Lincoln was

IN FAVOR OF CHRISTIANITY

To do so, I will offer the evidence of Mr. Graham, who knew Lincoln when he was a boy in Kentucky, with whom Lincoln boarded some two years; and if any man on earth ought to know Lincoln's religious faith or belief, that man is Mentor Graham, who was intimate with Lincoln from the time he came to Illinois to the time he left for Washington City. I will give the letter in full.

STATEMENT OF MR. GRAHAM

PETERSBURG, ILL., March 17, 1874.

B. F. IRWIN:

SIR—In reply to your inquiries, Abraham Lincoln was living at my house in New Salem, going to school, studying English grammar and surveying, in the year 1833. One morning he said to me, "Graham, what do you think about the anger of the Lord?" I replied, "I believe the Lord never was angry or mad and never would be; that His loving kindness endurest forever; that He never changes." Said Lincoln, "I have a little manuscript written, which I will show you"; and stated he thought of having it published. Offering it to me, he said he had never showed it to anyone, and still thought of having it published. The size of the manuscript was about one-half quire of foolscap, written in a very plain hand, on the subject of Christianity and a defense of universal salvation. The commencement of it was something respecting the God of the universe never being excited, mad, or angry. I had the manuscript in my possession some week or ten days. I have read many books on the subject of theology and I don't think in point of perspicuity and plainness of reasoning, I ever read one to surpass

> it. I remember well his argument. He took the passage, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," and followed up with the proposition that whatever the breach or injury of Adam's transgressions to the human race was, which no doubt was very great, was made just and right by the atonement of Christ.
>
> As to Major Hill burning the manuscript, I don't believe he did, nor do I think he would have done such a thing. About the burning of a paper by Hill, I have some recollection of his snatching a letter from Lincoln and putting it into the fire. It was a letter written by Hill to McNamur. His real name was McNeal. Some of the school children had picked up the letter and handed it to Lincoln. Hill and Lincoln were talking about it, when Hill snatched the letter from Lincoln and put it into the fire. The letter was respecting a young lady, Miss Ann Rutledge, for whom all three of these gentlemen seemed to have respect. Yours truly,
>
> MENTOR GRAHAM.

Now the next point I wish to notice is Mr. Herndon's statement, in his Abbott letter, that Lincoln, in 1846, was charged with being an infidel. Herndon says he [Lincoln] did not deny the charge, because it was true. As I have before stated, I admit the charge was

made, and I think at the time there was no public denial by Lincoln, for the reason that the canvass was made on political grounds, and not religious faith or belief. Nevertheless, the charge was denied, as the following letter will show.

STATEMENT OF THOMAS MOSTILLER

PLEASANT PLAINS, ILL., April 28, 1874.

B. F. IRWIN:

SIR—In regard to your inquiry, just received, of what I heard Lincoln say about a charge of infidelity made against him when a candidate for Congress in 1847, or '48, it was this. I was present and heard Josiah Grady ask Lincoln a question or two regarding a charge made against Lincoln of being an infidel, and Lincoln unqualifiedly denied the charge of infidelity, and said, in addition, his parents were Baptists, and brought him up in the belief of the Christian religion; and he believed in the Christian religion as much as anyone, but was sorry to say he had or made no pretensions to religion himself. I can't give his exact words, but would make oath anywhere that he positively denied the charge made against him of infidelity. That was the first time I ever heard of the charge of infidelity against Lincoln.

Grady did not say that he would not

vote for Lincoln if he was an infidel; but my understanding from Grady was, that he would not vote for Lincoln if he was an infidel, and Grady did, as I suppose, vote for him. I understood him that he should.

Respectfully,

THOMAS MOSTILLER.

MENARD COUNTY, ILL.

The next evidence I shall offer is that of Isaac Cogdal, an intimate friend of Lincoln's from the time Lincoln came to Salem, Menard County, to the time he left for Washington City, and I will let Cogdal speak for himself.

STATEMENT OF ISAAC COGDAL

April 10, 1874.

B. F. IRWIN: Yours received making inquiries about what I heard Lincoln say about his religious belief, is this, as near as I can tell it and recollect. I think it was in 1859, I was in Lincoln's office in Springfield, and I had a curiosity to know his opinions or belief religiously; and I called on him for his faith in the presence of W. H. Herndon. At least Herndon was in the office at the time. Lincoln expressed himself in about these words: He did not nor could not believe in the endless punishment of any one of the human race. He understood punishment for sin to be

> a Bible doctrine; that the punishment was parental in its object, aim, and design, and intended for the good of the offender; hence it must cease when justice is satisfied. He added that all that was lost by the transgression of Adam was made good by the atonement: all that was lost by the fall was made good by the sacrifice, and he added this remark, that punishment being a "provision of the gospel system, he was not sure but the world would be better off if a little more punishment was preached by our ministers, and not so much pardon of sin." I then, in reply, told Mr. Lincoln he was a sound Universalist, and would advise him to say but little about his belief, as it was an unpopular doctrine, though I fully agreed with him in sentiment. Lincoln replied that he never took any part in the argument or discussion of theological questions. Much more was said, but the above are the ideas as advanced by Lincoln there.
>
> Respectfully yours,
> ISAAC COGDAL.

The next witness I shall offer on the subject is Jonathan Harnett, of Pleasant Plains. Mr. Harnett is here. I shall now furnish a statement over his signature, as he is present and dictates as I write.

DICTATED STATEMENT OF JONATHAN HARNETT

Mr. Harnett says, that in 1858, a short time after he came to Illinois, he had a curiosity to see Lincoln and went into his office. There were several others in that he did not know; that religious faith seemed to be the subject of conversation. After some time was spent in the controversy, it seemed to be Lincoln's time, and in a few words he heard Lincoln condense into a small space greater thoughts and larger ideas, and sounder logic, than he ever heard brought into so small space. Lincoln, he says, covered more ground in a few words than he could in a week, and closed up with the restitution of all things to God, as the doctrine taught in the scriptures, and if anyone was left in doubt in regard to his belief in the atonement of Christ and the final salvation of all men, he removed those doubts in a few questions he answered and propounded to others. After expressing himself, some one or two took exceptions to his position, and he asked a few questions that cornered his interrogators and left no room to doubt or question his soundness on the atonement of Christ, and salvation finally of all men. He did not pretend to know just when that event would be consummated, but that it would be the ultimate result, that Christ must reign supreme, high over all, The Saviour of all; and the supreme Ruler, he could not be with one out of the fold; all must come in, with his understanding of the doctrine taught in the scriptures.

[The above statement since writing it has been read to Mr. Harnett and indorsed by him.]

The next evidence I shall offer is Erasmus Manford, of Chicago. About 1850, he had a debate in Springfield, Ill., with Mr. Lewis. In his book, "Twenty-five Years in the West," page 219, he says: "I

remember well seeing Mr. Lincoln then punctually every day and night. He often nodded his head to me when I made a strong point." Does that look as though Lincoln was an infidel? Manford was discussing the proposition of the restitution of all things to God which is manifested in Christ Jesus our Lord. Manford gives the quotation, chapter, and verse, and Lincoln nods assent to the position. That nodding assent to the restitution agrees precisely with Mr. Harnett's statement of Lincoln's position in his presence seven or eight years afterward. Everyone understands that nodding assent to the argument of a speaker is an indorsement of what is said, and about equivalent to speaking it yourself. Manford so understood it: so anyone would understand it.

My next and last witness is W. H. Herndon. In his Abbott lecture in 1870, Herndon says that Lincoln's belief was, that

ALL WOULD BE SAVED,

or none. That remark he frequently or often made; that agrees with Harnett's statement that he believed all would be saved. When a man believes all men will be saved, he can then be logical and say all will be saved or none, and not otherwise. In the same letter, Mr. Herndon says Mr. Lincoln held that God had a fixed punishment for sin and no means could bribe him to remit that punishment. That evidence agrees with Cogdal's statement that sin was to be punished, but not endlessly. Both Herndon and Cogdal agree in the statement that Lincoln believed that if our ministers would preach punishment and not so much pardon the world would be benefited by it.

I am now through with the evidence I shall offer at

this time, though I could add the evidence of a dozen more to the same purport. I think I have clearly proved that

LINCOLN WAS A UNIVERSALIST

in 1833; that he wrote a manuscript on that subject then; that in 1847 he

DENIED THE CHARGE

of infidelity; that in 1850-58-59 he was still a Universalist. If this be true when was he an infidel? But to get a clear understanding of the case, Universalism and infidelity are as far apart as the poles. Universalism maintains that there is one God, whose nature is love revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ. This Lincoln certainly believed, infidelity denies it. Universalism maintains that Christ was the Son of God; infidelity denies it. Universalism maintains that the Old and New Testament Scriptures contain a record of God's revelation to man; infidelity denies it, and says the New Testament is no more inspired than Homer's songs, Milton's "Paradise Lost," or Shakspeare. My authority for the infidel view is W. H. Herndon, in his letter.

Before closing, I wish it distinctly understood that if I could show that

LINCOLN WAS NOT AN INFIDEL

without showing him a Universalist, I would do so; that I am not trying to bolster up Universalism on Lincoln's faith, as I do not claim to be a Universalist myself.

There are many points in Mr. Herndon's lecture and letter that I might notice, but as I am only trying to show that

HERNDON IS WRONG

in his understanding of Lincoln's religious belief, I shall not notice them, as they do not concern me or the question in dispute.

Mr. Herndon, in his lecture and letter both, says Mr. Lincoln wrote a manuscript against Christianity. Mr. Graham,

LINCOLN'S TEACHER

at the time, testifies that he had the manuscript in his possession eight to ten days, read it two or three times carefully and it was in favor of Christianity and universal salvation. Mr. Mostiller says Lincoln flatly denied infidelity in 1847, and he would swear to it. Mr. Harnett heard Lincoln on the atonement in 1858. Mr. Cogdal testifies to the same in 1859. The character of all these men for truth and veracity is as good as any man in Sangamon or Menard County. Harnett and Mostiller are both Methodists, differing politically. Graham and Cogdal are both Universalists, and agree politically. Mr. Herndon in his letter says the manuscript was burned by Sam Hill. Mr. Graham explains it was a letter in regard to a lady,

MISS ANN RUTLEDGE,

that Hill burned. It seems to me Mr. Herndon has got the manuscript and letter confounded, and shot off hand without taking aim at the right object. My friend Herndon, at the close of his lecture, derives consolation from the fact that a true history can be written free from the fear of fire and stake. Friend Herndon, if your life is certainly not in danger some true spirit will

DRAG THE TRUTH

out to the light of day.

But hear the closing words of Herndon's lecture;

"Now let it be written in history and on Mr. Lincoln's tomb he died an unbeliever." Mr. Herndon is in a hurry about it. Be patient, William; wait for the unfolding of events. The decree has long since gone out; those words will never be inscribed on

LINCOLN'S TOMB,

nor written in history. When my friend, W. H. Herndon, dies, if he wishes a monument on a small scale placed over his grave with the inscription, "Here lies W. H. Herndon, a man who in life held that the New Testament Scriptures were no more inspired than Homer's songs, Milton's Paradise Lost, or Shakspeare," or if he desires it, add "Munchausen's Travels," I will not, for one, object to the inscription. As regards Mr. Herndon's own belief, he leaves no room for doubt.

B. F. IRWIN.

From the Illinois *State Journal*, Saturday Morning, May 15, 1874.

MORE TESTIMONY

Letter from the Hon. Wm. Reid, U. S. Consul at Dundee, Scotland. (Dundee, Scotland, Correspondence [March 4, 1874] Portland [Oregon] *Oregonian*).

The *Weekly Oregonian* of January last arrived and I am grieved to see in it opened afresh that controversy over Lincoln's religious views. Being well conversant with the affairs of the Lincoln family, knowing Mrs. Lincoln personally, having been in correspondence with that lady, and having also been of some assistance in a work entitled "Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln," I may be permitted to speak with some knowledge of the facts.

Lincoln, when 16 years of age,

IN THE BACKWOODS OF WESTERN INDIANA

heard a sermon by a traveling Presbyterian minister —the Rev. Dr. Smith—(afterwards of the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, Illinois) then a minister of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The subject was: "Is there no Balm in Gilead? Is there no Physician there?" The sermon was delivered at the village of Rockfort, four miles from the small farm of Thomas Lincoln, Abraham's father. There was a great revival on that occasion. Always a deep thinker, even when a boy, Lincoln was seriously impressed. Adopting his own words, he remembered the sermon for more than twenty years afterwards. Book after book he then read on the authenticity of the Scriptures, and was satisfied. Many years after delivering that sermon Dr. Smith removed to Springfield, Illinois.

This same Dr. Smith, I spent two years with here at Dundee, and attended him to his death in 1871. He was the bosom friend of Lincoln, and the friend and dearly beloved pastor of the Lincoln family.

Some years after Dr. Smith happened on a Sabbath day, in his church at Springfield, to re-deliver his sermon (delivered, I think, eighteen years previous). "Is there no Balm in Gilead? Is there no Physician there?" Lincoln, always a regular attendant, was there and was much startled. When the congregation had gone, he sought the preacher. "Dr. Smith," said he, "was it you who preached that sermon when I was a boy at Rockfort?" "Yes." "Well," said Mr. Lincoln, "I have never forgotten that sermon, and never will." I need not narrate what then passed between them. Sometime after this a discussion arose in Springfield, as to the credibility of the Scripture.

Knowing Lincoln's well-balanced mind, his studious and deep-thinking nature and downright honesty, a gentleman, anxious to have his views, asked if he believed the Scriptures were strictly true. Lincoln answered: "I have investigated that matter thoroughly, as a lawyer would do, examining testimony, and I hold that the arguments in favor of the credibility, inspiration, and Divine authority of the Scripture are unanswerable."

At an annual meeting of the Presbyterian Church of Springfield, or rather of the Bible Society of that church, Lincoln delivered a long address on the same subject—the authenticity of the Scriptures. An able address it was. His arguments are too lengthy for me to narrate. For seven years, down to the day of his departure for Washington to

ASSUME THE DUTIES OF THE PRESIDENCY,

he was a member of that congregation, and took part and aided in all benevolent undertakings in connection with the church. Were I allowed to unfold to the public what is sacred, that which I know of Mr. Lincoln's inner life during the four years he was President, his memory would be revered by all Christians for his entire dependence during that eventful period upon God's guidance, and not on himself. Truly no man thought less of himself and of his nothingness without God. This is exemplified in his public life. When assuming the Presidency, what did he say? Speaking of the contrast of his time to Washington's:

"I feel that I cannot succeed without the same Divine Aid which sustained him [Washington], and on the same Almighty Being I place my reliance for support. And I hope that you, my friends, will all pray that I may receive that Divine assistance, without which I

cannot succeed, but with which success is certain."

If an infidel, then is it possible that Abraham Lincoln could be an honest man as the world knows he was —and make that assertion? Is it necessary for me to say more? If so, let me remind you of his words

(1) To that zealous

LADY OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMISSION

during the war, in answer to her views of religion:

If what you have told me is really a correct view, I think I can say with sincerity that I hope I am a Christian.

(2) To the Philadelphia Church Conference in 1864: Allow me to attest, in response to your address, the accuracy of its historical statements; indorse the sentiments it expresses, and thank you in the Nation's name for the sure promise it gives. God bless the Methodist Church, God bless all the churches, and blessed be God who giveth us, in this our great trial, churches!

(3) To the Cabinet on the emancipation of the slaves:

"I made a solemn vow before God that if General Lee were driven from Pennsylvania, I would crown the result by declaring freedom to the slaves."

(4) On the same subject [slavery] remember he said: "Whatever appears to be God's will, I will do."

ONE MORE FINAL PUBLIC ACT

and I am done. At Baltimore he was presented by the negroes of that city with a copy of the Scriptures. In reply, Lincoln said:

"In regard to the great Book, I have only to say, it is the best gift which God has given to man. All the good from the Saviour of the world is communicated

to us through this Book. But for that Book we could not know right from wrong. All those things desirable to man are contained in it."

It may appear unnecessary for me to repeat Lincoln's

PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS OF RELIGION

in conjunction with what I have issued to the world for the first time, as to his religious life in private before he was President, but as my object is to connect his private and public religious expressions together, and bring them down from the time he was sixteen years old to his death, and to show that he was, for these thirty years,

UNIFORMLY A CHRISTIAN MAN,

you will pardon my repeating in part what the whole world already knows. Take Lincoln's expressions altogether as above quoted by me, and I submit you will find not only an absence of the slightest doubt of religion on his part, but an entire reliance on God alone for guiding himself and the events of the world. And yet that foolish man, Herndon, will say—and I am sorry to see a small portion of the American press will repeat—that Abraham Lincoln was an Infidel. Marvelous! I am proud to think I have in my possession—as a reward for a few insignificant services done by me on account of Mrs. Lincoln—the great and Martyred President's psalm book, which he used while at the White House, and I shall retain it as a proud memento for my family, of "Lincoln the Good—the Saviour of his Country."

A word before I close, as to Mrs. Lincoln. She is a lady of great merit, and spite of Herndon's mad expression to the contrary, was dearly loved by the President, as his letters to her will show, and one does not wonder at it, as her love and regard for him

to this day is even greater than tongue can tell. If the American people understood Mrs. Lincoln as well as I do, they would respect her equally as they did Lincoln.

Yours truly,
WILLIAM REED,
United States Consul, Dundee, Scotland.

From the Illinois *State Journal*, Saturday Morning, May 15, 1874.

WHY LINCOLN APPOINTED HIM

Reading (Pa.) *News*

The Rev. James Shrigley who is well known here, was appointed by President Lincoln a hospital Chaplain during the war. Pending his confirmation by the United States, a self-constituted committee of the Young Men's Christian Association called on the President to protest against the appointment. After Mr. Shrigley's name had been mentioned the President said: "Oh, yes, I have sent it to the Senate. His testimonials are highly satisfactory, and the appointment will, no doubt, be confirmed at an early day."

The young men replied: "But, sir, we have come not to ask the appointment, but to solicit you to withdraw the nomination, on the ground that Mr. Shrigley is not evangelical in his sentiments." "Ah!" said the President, "that alters the case. On what point of doctrine is the gentleman unsound?" "He does not believe in endless punishment," was the reply. "Yes," added another of the committee, "he believes that even the rebels themselves will finally be saved, and it will never do to have a man with such views a hospital Chaplain."

The President hesitated to reply for a moment, and

then responded with an emphasis they will long remember: "If that be so, gentlemen, and there be any way under heaven whereby the rebels can be saved, then for God's sake let the man be appointed!"

He was appointed.

From the *Daily Illinois State Register*, Friday, April 29, 1881.

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APPENDIX VII

"THE CHRISTIAN'S DEFENCE"

THE debate out of which this volume grew was held at Columbus, Mississippi, in the spring of 1841, between Rev. James Smith and Mr. C. G. Olmsted. Mr. Olmsted, the author of a work entitled, "The Bible Its Own Refutation," was a resident of Columbus. Dr. Smith visited this city during the winter of 1839-1840, and finding the young men of the place to be very largely under the influence of Mr. Olmsted, he delivered a series of lectures, especially addressed to the young men of the place, on "The Natures and Tendencies of Infidelity," and another upon, "The Evidences of Christianity." While these lectures were in progress, Dr. Smith was approached by a committee, who sympathized with Mr. Olmsted's views, and who, with the sanction of Mr. Olmsted, brought a written challenge to Dr. Smith to meet Mr. Olmsted in a public discussion of the whole ground at issue between them. Dr. Smith accepted on condition that he have time for adequate preparation. He communicated with friends in Great Britain, who procured and sent to him the latest and best material bearing on the subject. His book contains reproductions of the supposed Zodiac at Denderah, and a colored reproduction from the monuments of Egypt of brickmakers, believed to be Israelites. The researches of Rawlinson were made available to him, and a considerable body of additional literature.

Because Dr. Smith's book has been spoken of slightingly by men who never saw it and who had the vaguest possible notion of its content, and because the book itself is so excessively rare that in the nature of the case few readers of this volume can have access to it, I have copied the Title Page, a portion of the advertisement, and the whole of the very full Table of Contents.

We need not concern ourselves with the question whether Dr. Smith's line of argument is that which probably would be found most cogent if a similar debate were to be held at the present day. Sources of information are now available, of which neither Dr. Smith nor his opponent could possibly have had any knowledge. But any reader of this chapter analysis will be compelled to testify that a book which covered the ground of this outline and did it with logical acumen and force of reasoning, is not to be spoken of now in terms other than those of admiration for the industry and earnestness of the author, and the cogency of the conclusions which he deduced from his premises. One is prepared to believe from the testimony included in a number of letters that are reprinted in the advertisement and in the preface that these lectures produced a profound impression upon those who heard this discussion.

The more carefully these lectures are examined, the more probable does it appear that in form and method they would have been likely to make, what they appear to have made, a very strong impression upon Abraham Lincoln. It must have been evident to him that Dr. Smith was familiar with both sides of the question, and Lincoln can but have admired the courage and ardor with which he went into a discussion so fully in keeping with methods which

Abraham Lincoln himself enjoyed and which later he employed in his great debate with Douglas. We can well believe that he spoke with the utmost sincerity when he told Dr. Smith that he counted the argument unanswerable, and stated to his brother-in-law, Hon. Ninian W. Edwards, and his associate at the bar, Mr. Thomas Lewis, that these lectures had modified his own opinion.

NOTICES OF THE DEBATE WHICH LED TO THE PUBLISHING OF THE CHRISTIAN'S DEFENCE

From the *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, Columbus, Miss., 1841

MR. EDITOR—I have thought that a concise account of this debate might not be unacceptable to your readers. It is a mortifying fact, that this city has become FAMOUS—or rather INFAMOUS for the prevalence of deism and atheism among her citizens. This has been produced in a good degree by the efforts of an old gentleman by the name Olmsted. Since his residence here, which has been for about four years, he has been untiring in his exertions to sow the seeds of moral death in this community. He has organized his converts into a band, that operates systematically. He has written a book, which is not exceeded by TOM PAINE'S *Age of Reason*, for scurrility and ridicule. The old gentleman is as artful as the old DESTROYER himself; by which means he has obtained an immense influence over the minds of the young men of this place.

The circumstances which gave rise to the debate were as follows: The Rev. James Smith, during a visit in this city, delivered a few discourses on the dangerous tendencies of infidelity, addressing himself particularly to the youth. This induced a committee of infidel gentlemen to address a written

challenge to Mr. S., to meet their champion, Mr. O., in a public debate. Mr. S. by the advice of many intelligent friends of truth, accepted the challenge. The time arrived, and the discussion commenced. All was anxiety and interest. The house was crowded, even the aisles and windows, with attentive hearers. They arranged to speak alternately, one, two hours each night, and the other a half hour; so the debate continued two hours and a half each night. From the representation of Mr. O's talents, learning, and preparation, we were made to tremble for the results; but we were not a little disappointed to find the old gentleman fall far below his fame....

He asserted that the Jews did not believe in a future state of existence, until after the Babylonish captivity; that they borrowed their doctrines of the immortality of the soul from the nations among whom they were dispersed—that the Jews believed in a plurality of gods—that St. Paul was the author of Christianity—that Christianity encourages polygamy. To prove this last position, he quoted Paul's directions to Timothy: "Let a bishop be the husband of one wife." And to crown the mass of absurdities, he endeavored to prove that the blessed Jesus was a base impostor.

We found Mr. Smith well prepared for the contest. He had his arguments systematically arranged—had written them all, and read them well. He proved to a demonstration, the GENUINENESS, AUTHENTICITY and INSPIRATION of the Old Testament Scriptures. His arguments were interesting and convincing. His arguments on the New Testament were equally happy, and if possible, more convincing. The conclusion of every inquirer after truth, must have been, that the champion of deism was signally

defeated, and his cause left bleeding on the field. I doubt not but the defeat would have been more complete, had Mr. S. omitted some of his personal allusions, and had he suppressed his natural inclination to sarcasm. Indeed his blasts of sarcasm were truly WITHERING. His opponent, finding that he could not cope with him in this respect, retreated, and took shelter under the sympathies of his audience.

Yours, &c.,
ONE OF THE HEARERS.

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THE

CHRISTIAN'S DEFENCE

CONTAINING
A FAIR STATEMENT AND IMPARTIAL EXAMINATION
OF THE
LEADING OBJECTIONS URGED BY INFIDELS
AGAINST THE
ANTIQUITY, GENUINENESS, CREDIBILITY AND INSPIRATION
OF THE
HOLY SCRIPTURES;
ENRICHED WITH COPIOUS EXTRACTS FROM LEARNED AUTHORS.

BY JAMES SMITH.

"The Christian Faith,

Unlike the tim'rous creeds of pagan
priests,

Is frank, stands forth to view, inviting all

To prove, examine, search, investigate;

And gave herself a light to see her by."

—*Pollock's Course of
Time*, B. iv.

"If I have done well, and as is fitting
the story, it is

that which I desired; but if slenderly
and meanly, it

is that which I could attain unto."—2
Maccabees xv, 38.

TWO VOLUMES IN ONE

CINCINNATI:

STEREOTYPED AND PUBLISHED BY J. A. JAMES

1843

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OF
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APPENDIX VIII

LINCOLN AND THE CHURCHES

By JOHN G. NICOLAY AND JOHN HAY

NOTE.—Some of the important material bearing upon Lincoln's religious convictions which was collected by Nicolay and Hay and published in the *Century Magazine*, has, through faulty indexing, been almost lost. The words "churches" and "religion" are not in the thick index in the tenth volume of their great work. Finding in the *Century Magazine* for August, 1889, an important article on this subject, I searched in vain for any way of finding it in the book by means of the index, and two librarians, working in separate libraries, searched for it and reported to me that it was not in the book. I came to the conclusion that in the editing of the work for its publication in book form, the two former secretaries of the President had deemed some of this matter too personal for their title, "Abraham Lincoln: a History." But I have discovered the missing passage in the sixth volume, pages 314-342. Its testimony is in full

accord with that subsequently given by Mr. Hay in the address delivered by him from Mr. Lincoln's old pew, which is printed in the volume of John Hay's addresses. The article in the *Century* is so important that the first and last portions of it will justify reprinting here. The omitted portions relate to the relations of Mr. Lincoln and of the Government to particular churches or denominations.

W. E. B.

IN a conflict which was founded upon the quickened moral sense of the people it was not strange that the Government received the most earnest support from the churches. From one end of the loyal States to the other all the religious organizations, with few exceptions, moved by the double forces of patriotism and religion, ranged themselves upon the side of the Government against the rebellion. A large number of pulpits in the North had already taken their places as tribunes for the defense of popular freedom, and it was from them that, at the menace of war, the first cry of danger and of defiance rang out. Those ministers who had for years been denouncing the encroachments of slavery did not wait for any organized action on the part of their colleagues, but proclaimed at once in a thousand varying tones that peace was "a blessing worth fighting for." The more conservative churches were but little in the rear of the more advanced. Those who had counseled moderation and patience with the South on account of the divided responsibility for slavery which rested on both halves of the nation speedily felt the sense of

release front the obligations of brotherhood when the South had repudiated and renounced them, and rallied to the support of the insulted flag with an earnestness not less ardent, and more steadily trustworthy, than that of the original antislavery clergy. As the war went on, and as every stage of it gave a clearer presage of the coming destruction of slavery, the deliverances of the churches became every day more and more decided in favor of the national cause and the downfall of human bondage. To detail the thousand ways in which the churches testified their support of the national cause, to give even an abstract of the countless expressions of loyalty which came from the different religious bodies of the country, would occupy many volumes; we can only refer briefly to a few of the more important utterances of some of the great religious societies.

In all the church conventions which met after the President's preliminary proclamation of the 22d of September, 1862, that act of liberation was greeted with the heartiest expressions of approval and support.

As the national authority began to be reëstablished throughout the States in rebellion, not the least embarrassing of the questions which generals in command were called upon to decide was that of the treatment of churches whose pastors were openly or covertly disloyal to the Union. There was no general plan adopted by the Government for such cases; in fact, it was impossible to formulate a policy which should meet so vast a variety of circumstances as presented themselves in the different regions of the South. The Board of Missions of the Methodist Church sent down some of their ablest ministers,

with general authority to take charge of abandoned churches, and to establish in them their interrupted worship. The mission boards of other denominations took similar action, and the Secretary of War[75] gave general orders to the officers commanding the different departments to permit ministers of the gospel bearing the commission of these mission boards to exercise the functions of their office and to give them all the aid, countenance, and support which might be practicable. But before and after these orders there was much clashing between the military and the ecclesiastical authorities, which had its rise generally in the individual temperaments of the respective generals and priests. There was an instance in one place where a young officer rose in his pew and requested an Episcopal minister to read the prayer for the President of the United States, which he had omitted. Upon the minister's refusal the soldier advanced to the pulpit and led the preacher, loudly protesting, to the door, and then quietly returning to the altar himself read the prayer —not much, it is to be feared, to the edification of the congregation. General Butler arrested a clergyman in Norfolk, and placed him at hard labor on the public works for disloyalty in belief and action; but the President reversed this sentence and changed it to one of exclusion from the Union lines. [76] The Catholic Bishop of Natchez having refused to read the prescribed form of prayer for the President, and having protested in an able and temperate paper against the orders of the commanding general in this regard, the latter ordered him to be expelled from the Union lines, although the order was almost immediately rescinded. General Rosecrans issued an order[77] in Missouri requiring the members of religious convocations to give satisfactory evidence

of their loyalty to the Government of the United States as a condition precedent to their assemblage and protection. In answer to the protestations which naturally resulted from this mandate he replied that it was given at the request of many loyal church members, both lay and clerical; that if he should permit all bodies claiming to be religious to meet without question, a convocation of Price's army, under the garb of religion, might assemble with impunity and plot treason. He claimed that there was no hardship in compelling the members of such assemblages to establish their loyalty by oath and certificate, and insisted that his order, while providing against public danger, really protected the purity and the freedom of religion.

In the course of these controversies between secessionist ministers and commanding generals an incident occurred which deserves a moment's notice, as it led to a clear and vigorous statement from Mr. Lincoln of his attitude in regard to these matters. During the year 1862 a somewhat bitter discussion arose between the Rev. Dr. McPheeters of the Vine Street Church in St. Louis and some of his congregation in regard to his supposed sympathies with the rebellion. Looking back upon the controversy from this distance of time it seems that rather hard measure was dealt to the parson; for although, from all the circumstances of the case, there appears little doubt that his feelings were strongly enlisted in the cause of the rebellion, he behaved with so much discretion that the principal offenses charged against him by his zealous parishioners were that he once baptized a small rebel by the name of Sterling Price, and that he would not declare himself in favor of the Union. The difference in his church grew continually more flagrant and was

entertained by interminable letters and statements on both sides, until at last the provost-marshal intervened, ordering the arrest of Dr. McPheeters, excluding him from his pulpit, and taking the control of his church out of the hands of its trustees. This action gave rise to extended comment, not only in Missouri, but throughout the Union. The President, being informed of it, wrote[78] to General Curtis disapproving the act of the provost-marshal, saying, in a terse and vigorous phrase, which immediately obtained wide currency, "The United States Government must not, as by this order, undertake to run the churches. When an individual in a church, or out of it, becomes dangerous to the public interest he must be checked; but let the churches, as such, take care of themselves." But even this peremptory and unmistakable command did not put an end to the discussion. Taking the hands of the Government away from the preacher did not quench the dissensions in the church, nor restore the pastor to the position which he occupied before the war; and almost a year later some of the friends of Dr. McPheeters considered it necessary and proper to ask the intervention of the President to restore to him all his ecclesiastical privileges in addition to the civil rights which they admitted he already enjoyed. This the President, in a letter[79] of equal clearness and vigor, refused to do. "I have never interfered," he said, "nor thought of interfering, as to who shall, or shall not, preach in any church; nor have I knowingly or believingly tolerated anyone else to so interfere by my authority"; but he continues, "If, after all, what is now sought is to have me put Dr. McPheeters back over the heads of a majority of his own congregation, that too will be declined. I will not have control of any church on any side." The case

finally ended by the exclusion of Dr. McPheeters from his pulpit by the order of the presbytery having ecclesiastical authority in the case.

In this wise and salutary abstention from any interference with the churches, which was dictated by his own convictions as well as enjoined by the Constitution, the President did not always have the support of his subordinates. He had not only, as we have seen, to administer occasional rebukes to his over-zealous generals, but even in his own Cabinet he was sometimes compelled to overrule a disposition to abuse of authority in things spiritual. Several weeks after he had so clearly expressed himself in the McPheeters case, he found, to his amazement, that the Secretary of War had been giving orders virtually placing the army in certain places at the disposition of a Methodist bishop for the enforcement of his ecclesiastical decrees. He addressed to Mr. Stanton a note of measured censure, [80] which was followed by an order from the War Department explaining and modifying the more objectionable features of the former document. The Secretary explained that his action had no other intention than to furnish "a means of rallying the Methodist people in favor of the Union, in localities where the rebellion had disorganized and scattered them."[81] This explanation was not entirely satisfactory to the President, but he thought best to make no further public reference to the matter. Scarcely was this affair disposed of when a complaint was received from Memphis of some interference by the military with a church edifice there. Mr. Lincoln made upon the paper this peremptory indorsement: "If the military have military need of the church building, let them keep it; otherwise, let them get out of it, and leave it and its owners alone, except for the

causes that justify the arrest of anyone."[82] Two months later the President, hearing of further complications in the case, made still another order, which even at the risk of wearying the reader we will give, from his own manuscript, as illustrating not only his conscientious desire that justice should be done, but also the exasperating obstacles he was continually compelled to surmount, in those troubled times, to accomplish, with all the vast powers at his disposition, this reasonable desire.

> "I am now told that the military were not in possession of the building; and yet that in pretended execution of the above they, the military, put one set of men out of and another set into the building. This, if true, is most extraordinary. I say again, if there be no military need for the building, leave it alone, neither putting anyone in or out of it, except on finding someone preaching or practicing treason, in which case lay hands upon him, just as if he were doing the same thing in any other building, or in the streets or highways."[83]

He at last made himself understood and his orders respected; yet so widespread was the tendency of generals to meddle with matters beyond their jurisdiction, that it took three years of such vehement injunctions as these to teach them to keep their hands away from the clergy and the churches.

Lincoln had a profound respect for every form of sincere religious belief. He steadily refused to show

favor to any particular denomination of Christians; and when General Grant issued an unjust and injurious order against the Jews, expelling them from his department, the President ordered it to be revoked the moment it was brought to his notice.[84]

He was a man of profound and intense religious feeling. We have no purpose of attempting to formulate his creed; we question if he himself ever did so. There have been swift witnesses who, judging from expressions uttered in his callow youth, have called him an atheist, and others who, with the most laudable intentions, have remembered improbable conversations which they bring forward to prove at once his orthodoxy and their own intimacy with him. But leaving aside these apocryphal evidences, we have only to look at his authentic public and private utterances to see how deep and strong in all the latter part of his life was the current of his religious thought and emotion. He continually invited and appreciated, at their highest value, the prayers of good people. The pressure of the tremendous problems by which he was surrounded; the awful moral significance of the conflict in which he was the chief combatant; the overwhelming sense of personal responsibility, which never left him for an hour—all contributed to produce, in a temperament naturally serious and predisposed to a spiritual view of life and conduct, a sense of reverent acceptance of the guidance of a Superior Power. From that morning when, standing amid the falling snowflakes on the railway car at Springfield, he asked the prayers of his neighbors in those touching phrases whose echo rose that night in invocations from thousands of family altars, to that memorable hour when on the steps of the Capitol he humbled himself before his Creator in the sublime words of the second inaugural, there is

not an expression known to have come from his lips or his pen but proves that he held himself answerable in every act of his career to a more august tribunal than any on earth. The fact that he was not a communicant of any church, and that he was singularly reserved in regard to his personal religious life, gives only the greater force to these striking proofs of his profound reverence and faith.

In final substantiation of this assertion, we subjoin two papers from the hand of the President, one official and the other private, which bear within themselves the imprint of a sincere devotion and a steadfast reliance upon the power and benignity of an overruling Providence. The first is an order which he issued on the 16th of November, 1864, on the observance of Sunday:

> "The President, Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, desires and enjoins the orderly observance of the Sabbath by the officers and men in the military and naval service. The importance for man and beast of the prescribed weekly rest, the sacred rights of Christian soldiers and sailors, a becoming deference to the best sentiment of Christian people, and a due regard for the Divine will, demand that Sunday labor in the Army and Navy be reduced to the measure of strict necessity. The discipline and character of the national forces should not suffer, nor the cause they defend be imperiled, by the profanation of the day or name of the Most High. 'At this time

> of public distress [adopting the words of Washington in 1776] men may find enough to do in the service of their God and their country without abandoning themselves to vice and immorality.' The first General Order issued by the Father of his Country after the Declaration of Independence indicated the spirit in which our institutions were founded and should ever be defended. 'The General hopes and trusts that every officer and man will endeavor to live and act as becomes a Christian soldier, defending the dearest rights and liberties of his country.'"[85]

The date of this remarkable order leaves no possibility for the insinuation that it sprung from any political purpose, or intention. Mr. Lincoln had just been re-elected by an overwhelming majority; his party was everywhere triumphant; his own personal popularity was unbounded; there was no temptation to hypocrisy or deceit. There is no explanation of the order except that it was the offspring of sincere conviction. But if it may be said that this was, after all, an exoteric utterance, springing from those relations of religion and good government which the wisest rulers have always recognized in their intercourse with the people, we will give one other document, of which nothing of the sort can be said. It is a paper which Mr. Lincoln wrote in September, 1862, while his mind was burdened with the weightiest question of his life, the weightiest with which this century has had to grapple. Wearied with

all the considerations of law and of expediency with which he had been struggling for two years, he retired within himself and tried to bring some order into his thoughts by rising above the wrangling of men and of parties, and pondering the relations of human government to the Divine. In this frame of mind, absolutely detached from any earthly considerations, he wrote this meditation. It has never been published. It was not written to be seen of men. It was penned in the awful sincerity of a perfectly honest soul trying to bring itself into closer communion with its Maker.

> "The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both *may* be and one *must* be wrong. God cannot be *for* and *against* the same thing at the same time. In the present civil war it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party; and yet the human instrumentalities, working just as they do, are of the best adaptation to effect His purpose. I am almost ready to say that this is probably true; that God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet. By His mere great power on the minds of the now contestants, He could have either *saved* or *destroyed* the Union without a human contest. Yet the contest began. And having begun, he could give the final victory to either side any day. Yet the contest

proceeds."

The following brief address by Mr. Lincoln appears never to have been published. It was discovered, just as this book was going to press, by Mr. Jesse W. Weik, who hastened to send it to me. It is the shorthand report of a brief address delivered by Mr. Lincoln at a railroad junction near La Fayette, Indiana, a few hours after he had left Springfield on his way to Washington, Saturday, February 11, 1860.

W. H. B.

> When I first came to the west some forty-four or forty-five years ago, at sundown you had completed a journey of some thirty miles, which you had commenced at sunrise; and you thought you had done well. Now, only six hours have elapsed since I left my home in Illinois, where I was surrounded by a large concourse of my fellow citizens, most all of whom I could recognize; and I find myself far from home, surrounded by the thousands I now see before me, who are strangers to me. Still we are bound together, I trust, in Christianity, civilization and patriotism, and are attached to our country and our whole country. While some of us may differ in political opinions, still we are all united in one feeling for the Union.

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A CONDENSED BIBLIOGRAPHY

(The bibliographical notes which the author made while this work was in preparation reached a total of several thousand. From these he at first selected about five hundred titles, being practically a catalogue of his own Lincoln library, a list of books about Lincoln which he considered worth buying. But this also appeared much longer than was needed for the purposes of this book, and he has therefore prepared this shorter list of books bearing more directly upon the subject matter of this volume, and for the convenience of such readers as are unfamiliar with the literature of the subject he has added comments upon some of the books or articles.)

I. Lincoln's Own Writings and Speeches

Abraham Lincoln: Complete Works. Edited by John G. Nicolay and John Hay. In Two Volumes. New York: The Century Company, 1894.

There is a larger edition in twelve volumes, with some additions, and there are two other notable collections, both of them good. No one of these, however, is entirely complete; and there are volumes such as "The Uncollected Letters of Lincoln" edited by Gilbert A. Tracy (Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1917) which supplement the "complete" works. Very nearly everything which the reader requires, however, is in the Nicolay and Hay work.

II. Lives of Abraham Lincoln

Autobiography. Facsimile Reproduction of Autobiographical Sketch written by Abraham Lincoln for Jesse W. Fell in 1860. Published by his daughters at Normal, Ill.

The Autobiography of Abraham Lincoln. Sketch furnished by him in 1860 to John Locke Scripps. New York: Francis D. Tandy Company, 1905.

This and the preceding item contain virtually all that Lincoln told the public about himself.

Life of Abraham Lincoln. By John Locke Scripps. 1860. Tribune Tract No. 6. Prepared from information given by Mr. Lincoln and read and approved by him before publication.

"*The Wigwam Edition.*" The Life, Speeches and Public Services of Abraham Lincoln, Together with a Sketch of Hannibal Hamlin. New York: Rudd and Carleton, 1860.

It disputes with Scripps the honor of being the first printed life of Lincoln, and is of great interest as showing how little was known of Lincoln in 1860 apart from the sketch which he had himself prepared.

Life of Abraham Lincoln. By J. Q. Howard, Cincinnati: Anderson, Gates and Wright, 1860. With pictures of the Wigwam on the back and is as rare and desirable as the real "Wigwam Edition."

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Brings the narrative down to the time of Lincoln's inauguration and was intended to have been followed by a second volume, but was received with such disfavor that the concluding volume was never issued.

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FOOTNOTES:

[1] All the quotations in this book from Herndon's *Lincoln* are from the first edition in three volumes.

[2] The habit of studying aloud, learned in the "blab-school," remained with him. Lamon says he read aloud and "couldn't read otherwise." Whitney tells of his writing a ruling one time when he was sitting (illegally) for Judge Davis, and he pronounced each word aloud as he wrote it. This was not his invariable custom, but it was a common one with him.

[3] Hodgenville was a Baptist settlement from its foundation. Robert Hodgen, for whom the settlement was named, and John Larue, his brother-in-law, for whom the county was named, were both Baptists, and among the first settlers was a Baptist minister, Rev. Benjamin Lyon.

[4] Baptisms of this noisy character were familiar to Lincoln in his boyhood and certainly as late as the period of his residence in New Salem. Henry Onstott, at whose tavern Lincoln boarded, tells of such baptisms performed by Rev. Abraham Bale, including one at which the husband of the lady who was being baptized called out to the preacher to hold her, as he valued her more highly than the best cow and calf in the county (*Lincoln and Salem*, p. 122).

[5] While the statements of Dennis Hanks are often colored by his imagination, he is, after all, our best witness concerning Lincoln's boyhood.

[6] Some writers have spoken of Mr. Elkin as a

Methodist circuit rider. Mrs. Lucinda Boyd, in a book which might better not have been published and which I will not name, but which is correct in some local matters, speaks of Rev. Robert Elkin, the minister who preached the funeral sermon of Mrs. Lincoln, as belonging to the "Traveling Baptist Church." She says: "His grave is in the open field, and soon the traces of it will be lost." Apparently this grave was in Clark County, Kentucky. I think, however, that she is in error as to the name Robert. It was David.

[7] The latest writer to lend to the incident of Nancy Lincoln's funeral the aid of a vivid imagination and a versatile pen is Rose Strunsky. Discarding the theory that Abraham wrote his first letter to invite a minister to come from Kentucky to preach his mother's funeral, she sends him on foot to a nearer settlement:

"The boy Abraham had his standards of life. There were things of too much meaning to let pass without some gesture. And the unceremonious burial in the forest haunted him. When he heard that a wandering preacher had reached the neighborhood, he tramped many miles in the snow to bring him to the spot where the dead body lay, so that a funeral sermon might be delivered over the now white grave" (*Abraham Lincoln*, p. 6).

There was nothing unusual about the burial. Nor was there anything unusual about the deferred funeral. These writers simply do not know the conditions of life in which the boy Lincoln lived.

[8] While this manuscript was in process of writing, Professor Raymond, of Berea College, Kentucky, enumerating his summer engagements for the season of 1919, informed

me of a funeral he was engaged to preach in August of a boy who died ten years ago. The boy's companions have by this time grown to manhood, but the service will be held: and before this book is published doubtless will have been held according to immemorial custom in that region. This is not because there has been no preacher in its vicinity within ten years; nor is there any reason to suppose that the delay in the case of Lincoln's mother was due to the utter absence of ministers. They were not abundant, certainly; but there is no reason whatever to suppose that in the interval between the death and funeral of Nancy Hanks no preacher had been in the neighborhood of Pigeon Creek.

[9] I have often been deeply impressed by the charity of primitive preachers for dead people, and their ingenuity in inventing possible opportunities for repentance where no outward sign was given or apparently possible. There was something impressive in their manner of doing it, as well as an exhibition of fine tenderness for the feelings of friends and of generosity toward the dead.

"*Between the saddle and the ground,*

He pardon sought and pardon found"

is a very precious article of faith in the creed of men who have to preach a stern doctrine to the living, with warning of a hell that yawns for all impenitent sinners.

[10] In my own judgment, it would have been better to have let the first edition stand. It ought not to have included these vulgarities; but they are not so bad as the impression which is created by the knowledge that a new edition had to be made on their account. They

are coarse bits of rustic buffoonery.

[11] I do not forget that Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks were married by Rev. Jesse Head, who was a Methodist preacher. But I do not find evidence that Mr. Head exerted any marked influence over them. Mr. Head was not only a minister, but a justice of the peace, an anti-slavery man, and a person of strong and righteous character. I am not sure whether the fact that he performed this marriage is not due in some measure to the fact that he was about the court house, and a convenient minister to find.

[12] Dr. Chapman goes even beyond Johnson in his admiration of these youthful lines. He says:

"It is profoundly significant that this child of destiny, at his life's early morning, in clumsy but impressive verse thus reverently coupled his name with that of his Creator.... I am not claiming for this fragment of a Lincoln manuscript any divine inspiration" (*Latest Light on Lincoln*, p. 315).

But he stops little short of that, and might about as well have claimed it. The simple truth is that the lines have no significance whatever. They were a current bit of schoolboy doggerel, not original with Lincoln, and were scribbled by him as by other boys, with no real purpose beyond that of working his name into a jingle.

[13] I have seen these and other examples of Lincoln's early penmanship in the library of Mr. Jesse W. Weik.

[14] The story of Johnny Kongapod was one which Lincoln often related in after life. It is found in several collections of his stories, and with some variation. The Indian himself has found a place in literature in "In the Boyhood

of Lincoln" by my friend, now deceased, Hezekiah Butterworth. The epitaph more nearly in its ancient English form is found in "David Elginbrod," by George Macdonald:

"*Here lie I, Martin Elginbrod;*

Hae mercy o' my soul, Lord God,

As I would hae if I were God,

And Thou wert Martin Elginbrod."

[15] "His early Baptist training made him a fatalist to the day of his death" (Herndon, I, 34).

[16] The story of Lincoln's love affairs lies mostly outside the field of our present inquiry. He had at least one more of them than his biographers have learned about. Those that are best known are the ones with Ann Rutledge, Mary Owens, and Mary Todd. Lamon declares that Lincoln loved Miss Matilda Edwards, sister of Ninian W. Edwards, whose wife was sister to Mary Todd. He gives this as the real reason for the estrangement of Lincoln and his fiancée (Lamon's *Life of Lincoln*, p. 259). This is vigorously denied by members of the Edwards family, and the opinions in Springfield are anything but unanimous. Herndon informs us that in 1840, when Lincoln was thirty-one, and during the period when he was attracted to Mary Todd, he proposed to Sarah Rickard, a girl of sixteen. The present writer has no occasion to go into the discussions attending these several affairs of the heart. Lincoln's unsettled condition of mind on matrimonial and other matters is, however, an important element in any study of his religious life in this period. Herndon, between whom and Mrs.

Lincoln little love was lost, was not unwilling to inform her and the world that Lincoln had loved one woman, at least, more than he ever loved her; and that he married her reluctantly. This was not pleasant information for a proud and erratic grief-stricken woman, and it is not certain that Herndon was impartial authority or that he learned the whole truth. Lincoln was not a lady's man, and Mary Owens was quite right in deeming him "deficient in those little links that make up the chain of a woman's happiness."

Students of the Lincoln material are informed by those who suppose themselves to know, that beside the above-mentioned adventures, Lincoln had at least one additional love affair, and one that was not to his credit. They are told that the proof of this exists in an unpublished letter from the hand of Lincoln, a letter sacredly guarded and seldom shown by its owner. If this book had any reason to go at length into the subject of Lincoln's love affairs, I should be glad to consider that matter in detail; for the owner of that letter has permitted me to read and copy it, and I have the copy, which I intend to use in another volume on Lincoln. I wish to say, however, that the letter, which is a free, unguarded note to an intimate friend, does not sustain the impression that Lincoln had any other love affair, or that any wrong act or motive lay behind his words. Lincoln was not a tactful man in his relations with women; but he was a clean man.

[17] "Mr. Lincoln was never agitated by any passion more than by his wonderful thirst for distinction. There is no instance where an important office was within his reach, and he did not try to get it" (Lamon, *Life of Lincoln*, p.

237). This is a harsh and unfriendly way of stating it, but it is not wholly false.

[18] Mr. John E. Burton has documentary evidence that Lincoln was associated as so-called partner with seven law firms. Mr. Burton has owned the firm signatures in Lincoln's handwriting as follows:

Stuart and Lincoln 1838
Ficklin and Lincoln 1842
Logan and Lincoln 1845
Harlan and Lincoln 1845
Goodrich and Lincoln October 1855
Lincoln and Herndon 1852
Lincoln and Lamon

But these associates, except Stuart, Logan, and Herndon, were not strictly partnerships. They were local associations with lawyers whose practice he shared.

[19] Mr. Barker, the bookseller and publisher of Springfield, has or had an interesting item in a volume which Mr. Lincoln presented to Rev. William A. Chapin, a returned missionary, who lived with the family of his relative, Albert Hale. Mr. Lincoln was on close terms with "Father Hale" and a friend of Mr. Chapin. The book is one volume, the others being lost, of a set entitled "*Horae Solitariae, or, Essays on Some Remarkable Names and Titles of the Holy Spirit.* First American from the Second London Edition. Philadelphia: Cochran & McLoughlan, 1801." The book bears no name of author. Upon the flyleaf is the autograph of Mr. Chapin in these words, "William A. Chapin, 1844. A present from Abr. Lincoln." How Lincoln obtained the book is not known; nor is it one for which he would have been likely to care. But he cared enough for the book or for the missionary or for both to present the one

to the other. His aversion to ministers, which Lamon portrays, may have had some reason in certain cases; but it was not inclusive of all ministers nor of ministers as a class.

[20] I have been at much trouble to get the exact name and dates of this little boy. He was called Eddie, and the name is sometimes given Edwin and sometimes Edward, and I did not find it easy to learn, even at the monument at Springfield, the exact date of his death. He was named for his father's friend, and associate in the Legislature, Edward Baker. He was born March 10, 1846, and died February 1, 1850. Lincoln's children were: Robert Todd, born August 1, 1843, still living; Edward Baker, born March 10, 1846, died in Springfield February 1, 1850; William Wallace, born December 21, 1850, died in the White House February 20, 1862; Thomas or "Tad," born April 4, 1853; died in Chicago, July 15, 1871. Mary Todd Lincoln, their mother, was born in Lexington, Kentucky, December 13, 1818; married Abraham Lincoln, November 4, 1842, and died in Springfield July 16, 1882.

The date of the death of Eddie is important, because it gives us a *terminus a quem* for Lincoln's acquaintance with Rev. James Smith. Dr. Smith gives the date as "in the latter part of 1849." I sought in vain not only in published Lives of Lincoln but in the material on file with the State Historical Society for the precise date. What is more surprising, Colonel Johnson, custodian of the Lincoln tomb, has made diligent search for me and cannot find the date. In an article, prepared for the Lincoln Centenary in 1909, Rev. Thomas D. Logan, D.D., then pastor of the church in Springfield which Lincoln attended and successor of Dr. Smith, said it was "about 1848 or 1849"; but in

working over the material, as he manifestly did, after furnishing it to *The Interior*, in which it was printed, and delivering the substance of it as a centenary address, he gives the date as February 1, 1850. This I judge to be correct, and it is upon his authority I have given that date above. The other dates of the Lincoln family's relation to this church support this statement.

[21] Governor Ford uses this term as inclusive of the "Long Nine" and their associates who voted for the combination of evils which brought financial disaster to Illinois in that early day. Among them were Stephen A. Douglas, Abraham Lincoln, John A. McClernand, and James Shields—"all of them spared monuments of popular wrath, evincing how safe it is to be a politician, but how disastrous it may be to the country to keep along with the present fervor of the people." FORD: *History of Illinois*.

[22] A careful reading of Mr. Lincoln's speeches while en route for Washington will reveal, I think, that Mr. Lincoln was confident there would be no war. A much more solemn note was in his First Inaugural, a few days later.

[23] Even Herndon commends Dr. Gurley and Bishop Simpson for their very conservative claims concerning the religion of Lincoln.

[24] Carpenter says that these were the negroes of Baltimore, and is probably correct.

[25] This curious passage, which is very nearly meaningless if read apart from its context, has to do with the appointment of the priestly families that furnished the porters, or guards, for the approaches to the temple in Jerusalem. It is found in I Chronicles 26:17-18.

[26] This well-known and picturesque passage describes the army of David when he was an outlaw and half a freebooter, fleeing from the fury of Saul and hiding in the cave of Adullam. I Samuel 22:2.

[27] "Mr. Lincoln had no method, system, or order in his exterior affairs; he had no library, no clerk, no stenographer; he had no common-place-book, no *index rerum*, no diary. Even when he was President and wanted to preserve a memorandum of anything, he noted it down on a card and stuck it into a drawer or in his vest pocket. But in his mental processes and operations, he had the most complete system and order. While outside of his mind all was anarchy and confusion, inside all was symmetry and method." WHITNEY: *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln*, p. 110.

[28] Mrs. Edwards, Mrs. Lincoln's sister, in a published interview which Barker of Springfield has reprinted in a limited edition, gives a circumstantial account of the wedding, which, she affirms, occurred on Sunday night. The calendar contradicts her. Nor would the court house have been open for the issue of the license on Sunday; its date is the date of the wedding. The license was procured, and the marriage was solemnized, on Friday.

[29] Newton Bateman was born at Fairfield, New York, July 27, 1822, and migrated with his parents to Illinois in his boyhood. He was graduated from Illinois College, in Jacksonville, in 1843, and was honored as one of the ablest men in the alumni of that institution. He first knew Abraham Lincoln in 1847, and knew him with increasing intimacy during the years of 1859 and 1860 when Mr. Bateman was in Springfield. Mr. Bateman served as Superintendent of Schools of the

State of Illinois continuously from 1859 to 1875, except for the single term 1863-65. During his administration the school system of Illinois made notable progress, and he is remembered as having done large things for the educational system of his State. He was the author of the plan for the education of all the children of all the people of the State at the expense of all the property of the State. He wrought his system into the new constitution of Illinois, adopted in 1871, while he was at the zenith of his power. He was repeatedly re-elected, his defeat in 1862 being a defeat shared with the whole Republican ticket of the State in an off-year election when nearly the whole North, weary of the war which had scarcely begun, defeated partly by hostility and partly by lethargy the party and the policies that had sent Lincoln to the White House; and Bateman was triumphantly re-elected when Lincoln was re-elected, and for many terms thereafter. He established the Normal School system of the State; and his work was monumental in the life of the State University. Few men deserve so well to be remembered with honor in Illinois.

At the close of his long term of service as Superintendent of Schools, he became President of Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois, from 1875 to 1893. He was small in stature, and by his friends was familiarly called "Little Newt," but was held in high regard as a man of honor and an educator of note. Besides his published reports and addresses, he compiled a large encyclopedia of men of Illinois,—a kind of "Who's Who" of much value. His family at one time proposed to gather and issue a memorial volume of his addresses, but the plan appears not to have been carried out. He died of angina pectoris at Galesburg, October

21, 1897.

[30] Bateman's version of the Farewell Address, as reported in the *State Journal*, was that accepted by Herndon, and, with its more profound recognition of God's providential care, is given in Lamon's *Life of Lincoln*, p. 506. It is repeated in his *Recollections*, p. 31.

[31] For these two reports and that of Lincoln and Hay, see the Appendix.

[32] Mr. Jesse W. Weik, who was associated with Herndon in the authorship of his *Life of Lincoln*, and who has Herndon's papers, has made diligent search for me in the effort to locate the notes of these interviews. Herndon certainly desired to preserve them, and desired that they should be published. But thus far they have not been found, and presumably are not in existence.

[33] Lamon was a Virginian by birth, and was, in many of his habits, a very different man from Lincoln, but Lincoln liked and trusted him.

[34] Black was Lamon's law partner in Washington after the war. The firm of Black, Lamon, and Hovey did a large business in prosecuting claims against the Government.

[35] This lecture is now very rare, and the text is given in the Appendix to this volume.

[36] This important communication containing signed letters from a number of Lincoln's friends is given in full in the Appendix.

[37] Although a number of these letters are quoted in the text, the article as a whole is so important that it is given in full in the Appendix.

[38] Herndon's letter to Dr. Smith was impudent, demanding that he answer as a man, if he could, and if not as a man, then as a Christian—a challenge which the old Scotchman answered in kind.

[39] The Abbott letter is printed in Herndon's *Life of Lincoln*, pp. 492-497: portions of it have been quoted in this book.

The Remsburg letter and the broadside above referred to are printed in full in the Appendix to this book.

[40] Statements of this nature show, what we know without them, that Herndon had never seen the "book" nor heard it described by anyone who actually saw it.

[41] We may note in passing that it is not in "Tam o' Shanter" but in "Holy Willie's Prayer" that Burns uses the line quoted by Matheny.

[42] I am informed that this is a slight error. Dr. Smith had another son, still younger.

[43] There are three copies in Chicago, one in the library of the University of Chicago, one in the library of McCormick Theological Seminary, and one in my own library. There are copies also in the libraries of Union Theological Seminary, New York; Center College, Danville, Kentucky; the College of the Bible, Lexington, Kentucky; the Library of Congress, and Lane Theological Seminary, Cincinnati. These, and the one owned by Miss Smith, are the only copies of which I have learned thus far; though doubtless there are others in dusty attics.

[44] This date is wrong. The book was not published until 1844.

[45] *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, by Robert Chambers, is published still by E. P.

Dutton & Co., New York, and sold at 75 cents. This is an excellent reprint of the first Edinburgh edition, which Lincoln first read.

[46] It is now known that it was through the influence of Robert Chambers that T. H. Huxley was present and made his famous reply to Bishop Wilberforce at Oxford in 1860. Huxley was in Oxford, but intended to have left that morning because he believed that the discussion would take a theological, or other than a scientific turn, and would be unprofitable, but "on the Friday afternoon he chanced to meet Robert Chambers, the reputed author of the *Vestiges of Creation*, who begged him not to desert them, accordingly he postponed his departure" (*Life and Letters of Thomas H. Huxley*, by his Son, I, 193). In this discussion Bishop Wilberforce, in closing a half-hour's clever, but unfair speech, turned to Huxley and asked him whether it was on the side of Huxley's grandfather or grandmother that he claimed his own descent from a monkey? Huxley endured the laughter and applause which followed this personal sally with something more than good nature. He turned to Sir Benjamin Brodie, who sat beside him, and slapping his knee, exclaimed: "The Lord hath delivered him into my hands!" It was even so. Huxley rose to reply, and said that he would not be ashamed of having a monkey as an ancestor, but he would be ashamed of any relationship to a gifted man, who, not content with success in his own sphere of activity, plunged into a discussion of matters of which he had no real acquaintance "only to obscure them by an aimless rhetoric, and distract the attention of his hearers from the real point at issue by eloquent digressions, and skilled appeals to religious prejudice."

In its way that speech established the popularity of Huxley as a debator, and effectually punctured one argument then coming into use in the discussion of evolution. It also was an incident never forgotten concerning Bishop Wilberforce. Huxley afterward wrote, "In justice to the Bishop, I am bound to say he bore me no malice, but was always courtesy itself when we met in after years." In the same letter Huxley says, "The odd part of the business is, that I should not have been present except for Robert Chambers."

[47] I have communicated with Mr. Burton and he agrees with me in the opinion that the inscription from Professor Anthon is not genuine. He thinks it may have been added by Dr. English, not with intent to deceive, but as giving his impression of the manner in which Lincoln acquired the book. Whoever wrote it I think was in error.

[48] This book had been written and was in course of revision when I procured Dr. Chapman's *Latest Light on Lincoln*. It is a book by one who loved Lincoln sincerely, and can discover in him no lack of any desirable quality; even physical beauty and grace of movement are here attributed to Lincoln, as well as the acceptance of all the fundamental articles of the creeds. He accepts the Beecher incident, declaring that Dr. Johnson informed him that "after thorough investigation he fully believed it to be truthful and authentic," and affirming that "upon the scene of this unique event there rests a halo of celestial beauty too sacred to be regarded with indifference or doubt." The halo may be there, but is it true? Was there any period of twenty-four hours while Lincoln was in the White House when

this could have occurred, and the fact concealed from the public? It is altogether less improbable that Mrs. Beecher in her extreme old age and failing mentality was mistaken about the identity of one of Mr. Beecher's callers.

[49] Dr. Johnson quotes this in his *Abraham Lincoln the Christian*, and with it gives a photo reproduction of this page of his manuscript, bearing in the margin the attestation of both Generals Sickles and Rusling:

"I certify that this statement of a conversation between President Lincoln and General Sickles, in my presence, at Washington, D. C., July 5, 1863, relating to Gettysburg, is correct and true. JAMES F. RUSLING, Trenton, N. J., Feb. 17, 1910."

"I hereby certify that the foregoing statement by General Rusling is true in substance. I know from my intimate acquaintance with President Lincoln that he was a religious man—God-fearing and God-loving ruler. D. E. SICKLES, Major General U. S. Army, Ret'd, New York, Feb. 11, 1911."

[50] The Library of Congress has a scurilous pamphlet entitled *Behind the Seams; by a Nigger Woman, who took in work for Mrs. Lincoln and Mrs. Davis, New York: The National News Company, 21 and 23 Ann Street, 1868*. The preface is signed, "Betsy X (her mark) Kickley, a Nigger." It is a coarse parody on the above, but would appear sometimes to have been mistaken for the original work.

[51] This incident must have appeared in print immediately after Lincoln's death, for I find it quoted in memorial addresses of May, 1865. Mr. Oldroyd has endeavored to learn for me in what paper he found it and on whose authority

it rests, but without result. He does not remember where he found it. It is inherently improbable, and rests on no adequate testimony. It ought to be wholly disregarded. The earliest reference I have found to the story in which Lincoln is alleged to have said to an unnamed Illinois minister "I do love Jesus" is in a sermon preached in the Baptist Church of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, April 19, 1865, by Rev. W. W. Whitcomb, which was published in the Oshkosh *Northwestern*, April 21, 1865, and in 1907 issued in pamphlet form, by John E. Burton. The form of quotation is indefinite, but I judge that the incident was current in the papers of that week, as it is quoted as something with which the congregation was assumed to be familiar. I judge, therefore, that this was a story that found currency immediately after Lincoln's death, running the round of the newspapers with no one's name attached.

[52] Lincoln addressed most of his friends by their family name, seldom prefixing "Mr." A few he called by their first name. Herndon he called "Billy." Ward Hill Lamon he addressed as "Hill." Some of his friends called him "Lincoln," but most of them, "Mr. Lincoln." If any habitually addressed him as "Abe," the author has been unable to learn the fact.

"Although I have heard of cheap fellows, professing that they were wont to address him as 'Abe,' I never knew any one who did it in his presence. Lincoln disdained ceremony, but he gave no license for being called 'Abe'." WHITNEY: *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln*, p. 53.

[53] Dr. Chapman, who appears to have permitted no improbable story of Lincoln's orthodoxy to escape him, records this incident with complete assurance of its correctness; but

it is a story which it is impossible to fit into the life of Lincoln.

In *Latest Light on Lincoln*, p. 396, Chapman says, "There is every reason for giving this remarkable story unquestioning credence." On the contrary, there is every good reason for questioning it at every essential point, and the questions do not evoke satisfactory answers.

[54] Whitney affirms that Lincoln was never a member of any secret society. If he had been, that society would certainly have produced a record of his membership.

[55] Whitney tells us of this in his *With Lincoln on the Circuit*, describing the instrument as a "French harp." This term has given rise to some ludicrous mistakes on the part of those who have quoted it In Kentucky and in "Egypt" a French harp is a harmonica.

[56]

> "Of dress, food, and the ordinary comforts and luxuries of life, he was an incompetent judge. He could not discern between well and ill-cooked and served food. He did not know whether or not clothes fitted. He did not know whether music was artistic or in bad taste." WHITNEY: *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln*, p. 52.

[57]

> "I repeat that his was one of the most uneven, eccentric, and heterogeneous

characters, probably, that ever played a part in the great drama of history; and it was for that reason that he was so greatly misjudged and misunderstood; that he was on the one hand described as a mere humorist—a sort of Artemus Ward or Mark Twain—that it was thought that by some irony of fate a low comedian had got into the Presidential chair by mistake and that the nation was being delivered over to conflagration, while this modern Nero fiddled upon its ruins; or that, on the other hand, he should have been thus sketched by as high authority as Ralph Waldo Emerson: 'He is the true history of the American people to his time. Step by step he walks beside them, quickening his march by theirs, the true representative of this continent, an entirely public man, Father of his Country, the pulse of twenty millions throbbing through his heart, the thought of their minds articulated by his tongue. His heart was as great as the world, but there was no room in it to hold the memory of a wrong.'" WHITNEY: *Life on the Circuit*

with Lincoln, p. 147.

"One of the most obvious of Mr. Lincoln's peculiarities was his dissimilitude of qualities, or inequality of conduct, his dignity of deportment and action, interspersed with freaks of frivolity and inanity; his high aspiration and achievement, and his descent into the most primitive vales of listlessness, and the most ridiculous buffoonery. He combined the consideration of the movement of armies or grave questions of international concern, with Nasby's feeble jokes or Dan Rice's clownish tricks. In the chief drawer of his cabinet table, all the current joke books of the time were in juxtaposition with official commissions lacking only his final signature, applications for pardons from death penalties, laws awaiting executive action, and orders, which, when issued, would control the fate of a million men and the destinies of unborn generations.... Hence it was that superficial persons, who expected great achievements to be set in a *mise en scéne*, and to be ushered in with a

> prologue, could not understand or appreciate that this wonderful man's administration was a succession of acts of grand and heroic statesmanship, or that he was a prodigy of intellect and moral force, and a genius in administration." WHITNEY: *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln*, pp. 147-48-49.

[58] Mr. Jesse W. Weik investigated this report, and told me of it. It comes not through Lewis or other members of the church, but through Lincoln's associates outside the church, who seem to have expected him to unite.

[59]

> "He had not then announced himself for freedom, only discussed the inexpediency of repealing the Missouri Compromise line. The Abolitionists that day [the day of Lincoln's State Fair speech] determined to make Lincoln take a stand. I determined he should not at that time, because the time had not yet come when Lincoln should show his hand. When Lovejoy announced the abolition gathering in the evening, I rushed to Lincoln, and said: 'Lincoln, go home, take Bob and the buggy, and leave the

country, go quickly, go right off, and never mind the order of your going.' Lincoln took the hint, got his horse and buggy, and did leave quickly, not noting the order of his going. He stayed away till all conventions and fairs were over." HERNDON, in LAMON, p. 354.

[60] Lincoln's evasion of an issue which he did not wish to meet was put to a severe test in 1864, when the convention that renominated him for the Presidency had to decide whether to renominate also Vice-President Hamlin. Lincoln liked Hamlin; but, while a Vice-President from Maine had strengthened the ticket in 1860, a war Democrat from one of the border States could help it more in 1864. Lincoln managed never to let it be known whether he favored Hamlin, who greatly desired his support, or whether, as was probably the case, he preferred Johnson. He was skillful in evasion when he chose to be so.

[61] *Abraham Lincoln; Evolution of His Literary Style.* By Daniel Kilham Dodge. Press of the University of Illinois, 1900.

[62] Few writers who knew Lincoln intimately have given us more detailed accounts of Lincoln's career as a story teller than his friend and associate, Major Henry C. Whitney, who habitually shared his bed in the rounds of the Eighth Judicial Circuit. In his chapter on "Lincoln as a Merry Andrew," in which he tells the undignified length to which these bouts of story telling were wont to go, he says: "But it is a singular fact that Lincoln very rarely told stories in his speeches. In both his forensic and political speeches he got down to serious

business, and threw away the mask of Momus altogether. I never heard him narrate but one story in a speech." *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln*, p. 179.

[63] These letters have lately been presented to the Massachusetts Historical Society.

[64] *Abraham Lincoln; The Evolution of His Emancipation Policy*. An address delivered before the Chicago Historical Society, February 27, 1906.

[65] See *The Evolution of Lincoln's Literary Style*, by Prof. Daniel Kilham Dodge. University of Illinois Press, 1900.

[66]

> "By reference to Mr. Lincoln's early political and literary performances it will appear that he was more than usually addicted to a florid style, and to greatly exaggerated figures of speech; that the plain, direct, homely, common-sense methods of his later and statesmanlike years were wholly wanting. Rhodomontade was as common in those youthful productions as plain assertion was in his mature life. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that, in the years of his adolescence, he is credited with very decided opinions, radical views, and florid expressions on the subject of religion; but he was forty-five years of age

> when I first knew him, and his views either underwent a change or else he had grown reticent on that great subject. Certain it is that I never heard Lincoln express himself on the subject of religion at all." WHITNEY: *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln*, p. 268.

[67] *The Evolution of Lincoln's Literary Style*, by Prof. D. K. Dodge.

[68] The foregoing list, together with a number which seem to me less reliably attested, I have taken from Johnson, *Abraham Lincoln, the Christian*, pp. 215-17.

[69] Dr. Chapman, who is not content with anything less than a complete orthodox system of theology for Lincoln, says:

"In the forefront of Mr. Lincoln's religious thinking was his belief in the Saviour's Deity." His first, and in fact his only proof, is, of course, the Bateman interview. Beyond this he falls into such generalities as his oft repeated mention of Him as "Our Lord," and declares that "again and again does Mr. Lincoln thus speak of the Saviour" (*Latest Light on Lincoln*, p. 319). If so, I have not found these repeated references in his authentic speeches and papers.

[70] A reference to Christ dying on the cross is in his lecture on Niagara Falls; and there are a few other references.

[71] Dr. Chapman's *Latest Light on Lincoln* has a few hitherto unprinted things, one of them being some notes by Rev. Dr. Gurley, the beginnings of a contemplated book or

pamphlet which he did not complete. The manuscript as produced by Dr. Chapman was furnished by Dr. Gurley's daughter, Mrs. Emma K. Adams, of Washington. The only incident of any considerable value is that Mr. Lincoln one night invited Dr. Gurley, who like himself was an early riser, to come to the White House next morning at seven o'clock for an hour's talk before breakfast. They had the talk and the breakfast. As Dr. Gurley walked away, he was asked whether he and Mr. Lincoln had been talking about the war, and he replied, "Far from it. We have been talking about the state of the soul after death. That is a subject of which Mr. Lincoln never tires. This morning, however, I was a listener, as Mr. Lincoln did all the talking" (*Latest Light on Lincoln*, p. 500).

There can be, I think, no serious question of Mr. Lincoln's faith in immortality. It was much more easy for a man of his training and temperament to hold that article of faith than some others which might seem to some other men more easily to be accepted.

[72] The chapter, sometimes alleged to have been from the Bible, which Lincoln read to his cabinet before submitting the Emancipation Proclamation.

[73] The accompanying article was originally prepared by its author (the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, in Springfield, Ill.), as a lecture, and has been repeatedly given in that form to various audiences. At the request of the editor of *Scribner's Monthly*, to whom it seemed that the testimony contained in the lecture was of permanent value, it is here presented with slight alterations, and with no departure from the rhetorical style which was determined by its original purpose.

[74] This is an error doubtless made by Mr. Irwin in copying. It should be June 16, 1858, instead of January. I have printed it as it stands, but the date should be corrected.

[75] March 10, 1864. McPherson, "History of the Rebellion," p. 522.

[76] Report of Judge-Advocate General, April 30, 1864.

[77] March 7, 1864.

[78] Jan. 2, 1863.

[79] Dec. 22, 1863.

[80] "After having made these declarations in good faith and in writing, you can conceive of my embarrassment at now having brought to me what purported to be a formal order of the War Department, bearing date November 30, 1863, giving Bishop Ames control and possession of all the Methodist churches in certain Southern military departments whose pastors have not been appointed by a loyal bishop or bishops, and ordering the military to aid him against any resistance which may be made to his taking such possession and control. What is to be done about it?" [Lincoln to Stanton, MS., Feb. 11, 1864.]

[81] Lincoln to Hogan, Feb. 13, 1864.

[82] Lincoln MS., March 4, 1864.

[83] Lincoln MS., May 13, 1864.

[84] War Records, Vol. XVII, pp. 424, 530.

[85] General McDowell used to tell a story which illustrates Mr. Lincoln's Sabbatarian feeling. The President had ordered a movement which required dispatch, and in his anxiety rode to McDowell's headquarters to inquire how soon he could start. "On Monday morning," said McDowell; "or, by pushing

things, perhaps Sunday afternoon." Lincoln, after a moment's thought, said, "McDowell, get a good ready and start Monday." [Herman Haupt, MS. Memoirs.]

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Transcribers Notes:

Punctuation has been preserved as it appears in the original publication.

Archaic and variable spelling has been preserved.

Variations in hyphenation and compound words have been preserved.

Obvious typos were silently corrected.

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