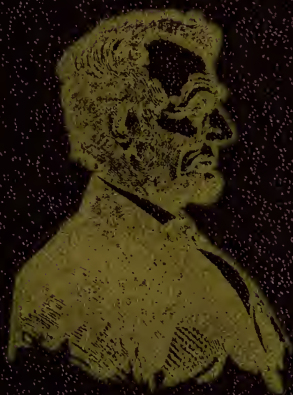


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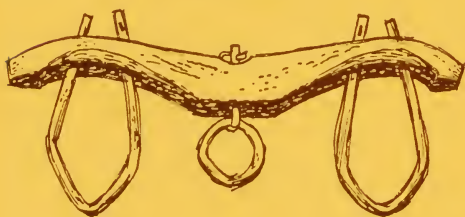
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# The Faith of Abraham Lincoln

By

D. RAYMOND TAGGART, D. D.



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DEDICATION

*Dedicated to the Glory of God  
in Grateful Recognition of His Gifts  
of an Excellent Wife and Our Daughters,  
Martha, Ruth and Esther,  
My Loyal Helpers in All My Undertakings*



## LINCOLN

By Berton Braley

*A little awkward and a little rough,  
Yet fit to walk with commoners or  
kings.*

*A heart that leapt at homely, simple  
things  
And yet a spirit made of sterner  
stuff.*

*Wistful and fond, yet adequate and  
strong,  
To bear the burdens which grim for-  
tune brings;*

*A high imagination on whose wings  
He soared beyond the passions of the  
throng.*

*He was the very soul, the sublimation  
Of that America he died to save,  
In him we read the genius of a nation  
Stalwart and tender, humorous and  
grave.*

*By Fate unmoved, by love and pity  
swayed,  
Masterful, whimsical—and unafraid!*

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## INTRODUCTION

The first time I was in London, England, I spent nearly every day walking about the old city to see the famous places I had read about. I also went often into the British Museum which contained many things of interest.

One day I found in the Library a copy of *Punch* (the English supposedly comic journal) lying on a table and one of the pages was a cartoon of Abraham Lincoln sitting on a mound of soldiers' skulls (during the Civil War) with his long legs crossed and telling a funny story to his Cabinet.

The next time I was in London, two years later, I had difficulty to get near enough to the speaker's stand in front of the Parliament Buildings to hear and see Great Britain's prominent leaders unveil a beautiful statue of Lincoln dedicated in his honor by that great nation. It stands there now, the only statue in front of the houses of Parliament.

It is a sad fact that the human race has a habit of lampooning and criticising and lying about its great men and women while they are living and then crowning them as heroes and heroines after they die.

John Bunyan was called a fool and put in jail where he wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* which will live forever. Florence Nightingale was called crazy because she wanted to do something for suffering and wounded soldiers, but she has passed on into the starhood of Saints. Nearly all of America's Presidents have been criticized for public acts that after years have proved to be for the welfare of this Republic. And the same habit will probably continue as long as humans continue to be the same sort.

I take pleasure in commending this book to all statesmen of every nation that they may have a better understanding of the high office to which they are called.

I commend it to all ministers of the Gospel whose rare privilege it is to inspire us to climb to higher spiritual heights, and lead the way.

I commend it to all educators to whom we have entrusted our most precious treasures, our sons and our daughters, whose duty and privilege it is theirs to mold, that they may have a clearer vision of the ideal citizen after whom we would like to have them patterned.

I commend it to our young men and young women, to our boys and our girls, as a book to be read for the pleasure of reading, but above and beyond that, a book that will help you to a better understanding of the long road that lies before you. I would endorse it as a text book for our schools and colleges. It gives a picture of the "Great American" as a God-like human being who lived his Christianity in daily life. How else shall we know that a man is a Christian except by his deeds? And if any one ever emphasized his Christian faith it was Abraham Lincoln who lived the Life. He was Christ-like. And the author of this book proves the case in a series of illustrations taken from living history.

It is with hearty pleasure that I commend this book to the multitude of readers, us "common people," Lincoln's neighbors. "God must have loved the common people, He made so many of them." Here is a book to be read with profit and instruction, giving as it does a vivid picture of him who in many ways will always be known as "*The Great American.*"

Meet your neighbor, Mr. Lincoln.

CHARLES M. SHELDON

## CHAPTER I

### *Apologia*

Ever since a certain wise man said, "Of the making of many books there is no end" every writer of an extended treatise has felt constrained to apologize in his preface, first of all to that wise man, and then to the weary flesh of his hoped-for readers. Of the making of books concerning Abraham Lincoln truly there seems to be no end, and he who attempts to read them all has set himself a prodigious task, but not an unpleasant or unprofitable one. But why should I add to his already heavy burden by adding another book? My apology is this. Some months ago the writer published three articles under the caption, *Was Abraham Lincoln a Christian?* and found so many interested readers, indeed became so interested himself, that the trail was followed farther, and in the hope that many readers will follow with him, the result of his study is herewith presented.

But we are not venturing on an unexplored field. A number of writers have preceded us and given us the benefits of their discoveries. Unfortunately there are but few of these books that are not out of print, and some of them are almost unobtainable, mute testimony to popular interest in the subject. If the material herewith presented is not new, at least the order of presentation will be somewhat different.

### *But Why Concern Ourselves*

Why should we delve into a dead man's thoughts? Let his deeds speak. Let us confine ourselves to the facts of his life. He was born poor, had little education, was elected President of the United States. He saved the Union. He freed the slaves. He died a martyr. Let us judge him by what he did; "by their fruits ye shall know them." Know what? Know their beliefs. The deeds are the expression of the faith. Ah, but then the faith was the important thing after all. Had it been different the deeds would have been different, and there would have been no Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln never joined a church. But suppose he had? Would not that denomination to which he belonged have been proud to claim him? So, because Lincoln belonged to no church, the unbeliever claims him as having belonged to his persuasion. "Look," says he with pride, "what great men unbelief produces! Lincoln was an unbeliever like myself." And so this hero of the ages has been claimed by the infidels, the atheists, the agnostics, the deists, the Universalists, the Unitarians, and the Spiritualists. An examination of the facts will show that while Lincoln never "belonged to a church" in the technical sense, yet the mature, the ripened, the perfected Lincoln who as Stanton pronounced as now belonging to the ages, did in the most real sense, "belong to the church of Jesus Christ." She bear him, she mothered him, she comforted him, she taught him, she buried him. That in a certain period of his life he passed, as most youths do, through the shad-

owed valleys of doubt and indifference, need not be denied, but the evening time was light.

Should the Church of Christ claim Lincoln? This most loved of all men outside of Bible times and characters was a super-character. He is a convincing argument. If he was a Christian, he is a telling argument for faith in Jesus Christ. But if he was not a Christian, then the outstanding man of our age was the product of unbelief. That kind of an argument is hard to refute. But happily it is not necessary.

Abraham Lincoln is not merely a celebrated American; he is a world celebrity. There were times during the Civil War when the tension between England and the Union was so great that war was scarcely averted, yet the first statue of an American in England is that of Abraham Lincoln.

While the writer was studying Chinese with a native teacher in the year that the China Revolution broke (1911), I was surprised by my teacher's using words that were not in my limited Chinese vocabulary. "Lin-kum—lin-kum." Not surprised that he knew words beyond my vocabulary, but surprised to find that this teacher with less than a high school education wanted to talk about Abraham Lincoln. And more surprised yet when he assured me that the story of Lincoln was known by multitudes of China's four hundred millions. No wonder that there was a revolution.

This story could be matched in any civilized country of the world. Among the best of scores of biographies of Abraham Lincoln may be named

*Abraham Lincoln* by Lord Charnwood, an Englishman; *Lincoln* by Emil Ludwig, a German; and *Lincoln, His Life in Photographs*, a recent book by an Austrian refugee from one of Hitler's concentration camps. It is said to our shame that our hero is better known abroad than at home. And he is known not as Napoleon is known as a man of power, to be feared, but a man to be loved. The following story written by Silas G. Pratt is an example.

Several years after Lincoln's death (1874) the writer, then a student in Germany, was traveling in Switzerland. Arriving early one morning at the little village of Thusis, at the northern end of the Via Mala, he entered an inn for breakfast. As he seated himself at a table he was surprised and delighted to notice hanging on a wall directly in front of him, a fine engraving of Abraham Lincoln.

It was like meeting an old friend and so far away from America, too, in that little place among the Alps, on the high mountains which are always covered with snow. The first thought was, here is a Swiss gentleman who has lived in the United States and has brought this picture back home with him. So when the landlord entered, I said, "Excuse me, sir, but have you not been in the United States?"

"No, indeed," he replied, "but why do you ask?"

"That picture of Lincoln," I said. "Where did you get it?"

"Oh, that picture! Why I bought that at Lucerne. It is the only one in this Canton (county) and I would not sell it for forty gulden," he exclaimed.

Now thoroughly interested, I again asked, "What made you buy it?" He answered very earnestly, "Because I love the man and his principles. He was a great man. Were you ever in America?" he then asked.

"Oh yes! I am an American," I replied.

"What! a native-born American!" he exclaimed, reach-



ing out his hand. "Give me your hand. I am proud to meet a countryman of the great Lincoln," he continued. "Now you must stay with me and let me show you the points of interest about here."

"You are very good," said I, "and since your love and reverence for Abraham Lincoln has prompted your kindness, in his name I thank you."

So presently we started and I enjoyed one of the happiest and most profitable days of my entire journey because I was a countryman of the good and great Lincoln. It was his life of kind deeds, his poverty and struggle, his honesty and truthfulness, and his final death for the cause of liberty and union of the states which, when over there, thousands of miles from America, had won for me this generous hospitality. The incident shows that a single character may ennoble and glorify a nation. A single name like magic secure consideration and protection to a race.—(Silas G. Pratt, *Lincoln in Story*, pp. 215-217)

In these war-troubled days we are having a new appreciation of what democracy means. In our re-evaluation of it, let us not forget the man who gave his life for democracy in America. And let us say it reverently, he rose again, and is one of the most powerful living influences for democracy in the world now. But Lincoln stood for Christian democracy, not God-less democracy.

If Lincoln was not a Christian, certainly the Christian Church ought to be the first to acknowledge it. Let us swear to the truth, even though it be to our own hurt. But if he was a Christian, let us defend the truth and claim our property, and let not the unbeliever filch our crown.

"Lincolnize America" was the motto for the Centennial celebration of Lincoln's birth, but is

it big enough? Broad enough? When we are talking of World Freedom, should we not say, "Lincolnize the World"? But is it deep enough? Should we not "Christianize" the world? To truly Lincolnize would be a long step toward Christianizing, for Lincoln was Christianity localized. But let us beware lest we secularize Lincoln, lest we remember his deeds, and miss his spirit. The body without the soul is dead. Too many biographers have de-Christianized Lincoln.

"Let American High Schools teach at least one year of Lincoln," says Judge R. M. Wanamaker. A fine suggestion! Let it be a year of Lincoln's history; a year of Lincoln's English; a year of Lincoln's logic; a year of Lincoln's nobility of character and faith in God.

## CHAPTER II

### WHAT IS MEANT BY "CHRISTIAN"

"Right is a circle," says a forgotten author, "of which 'just right' is the center; 'about right' is the circumference. You can make the circle as large as you please, but the center remains the same." The term *Christian* is just about as elastic in common usage. Any citizen of a Christian nation (so-called) would be rated as a Christian by a Mohammedan, and even the Church herself has been very liberal in extending the courtesies of the term which ought to have been guarded most jealously. It was a critic of the church who jibed, "There never was but one Christian, and they crucified Him." That was narrowing the circle to the circumference of the central point—too narrow to suit any of us, for we all want that circle drawn large enough to include "me," but not too far beyond. Perhaps it is too much to say that each professing Christian's life is his definition of the minimum of what it takes to make a Christian.

Nevertheless, we must agree on a definition of the term *Christian*, choose our *Quod demonstrandum esse*, if we are to discuss intelligently whether Abraham Lincoln qualified or not. What was Lincoln's definition, and where did he class himself? For this was a matter of so much concern to him that he once asked this question:

"Mrs. ———, I have formed a high opinion of

your Christian character, and now, as we are alone, have a mind to ask you to give me, in brief, your idea of what constitutes a true religious experience.' The woman replied that it consisted in a conviction of one's own sinfulness and weakness and personal need of the Saviour for strength and support; and though doctrinal views might differ, if one felt his need of Divine help and sought the aid of the Holy Spirit, it was evidence of having been born again. After a thoughtful pause Mr. Lincoln said earnestly: 'If what you have told me is really a correct view of this great subject, I think I can say with sincerity that I hope I am a Christian. I had lived until my Willie died without fully realizing these things. That blow overwhelmed me. It showed me my weakness as I had never felt it before; and if I can take what you have stated as a test, I think I can safely say that I know something of that change of which you speak; and I will further add that it has been my intention for some time, at a suitable opportunity, to make a public religious profession.'"<sup>1</sup>

When one notes the modesty, almost timidity, with which Lincoln states his claim to religious experience, it helps us to interpret a statement he made a little earlier, even more modest in his claims: "Mr. Bateman, I am not a Christian—God knows I would be one—" but of this later.<sup>2</sup>

Of course both statements could have been true. The thief on the cross died an approved Christian.

<sup>1</sup>Carpenter, *Six Months in the White House*, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup>Holland, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 237.

A few hours previous he might have said, with the full assent of the public, "I am not a Christian." To establish that President Lincoln died a Christian, it is not necessary to prove that all his life was lived as a Christian, although even that proposition might be upheld with considerable evidence. "The wind blows wherever it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. That is the way with every one who is born of the Spirit." Even Mr. Lincoln himself may not have known when that seed of regeneration lodged and germinated in his heart. From a child he knew the scriptures, and even in his childhood, as throughout his life, there was the sound of that never-resting Wind.

The Rev. William J. Johnstone to whom we owe much for his long study of this phase of Lincoln's life says:

### *Religious Development*

It is impossible to analyze the development of his religious life, but there are marked stages which may be designated as follows:

From 1809 to 1818, a period of nine years, represents his mother's training. From 1818 to 1831, a period of thirteen years, might be called drifting. The next four years, from 1831 to 1835, was the period of questioning. Then for thirteen years, from 1835 to 1848, his religious life seems to be characterized by indifferentism. The ten years from 1848 to 1858 were characterized by the honest doubter seeking the true light. From 1858 to 1862, a period of four years, there are unmistakable evidences of a great soul coming into full fellowship with his Master. The next three years, 1862 to 1865, he was, in

the highest meaning of the term, a true follower of Jesus Christ. While the last months of his life are distinctly marked by the deepening of his spiritual life.<sup>3</sup>

But some one may object that the creed outlined above, to which Lincoln assented is not sufficiently explicit on certain essential points. It could be accepted either by a Modernist or a Fundamentalist. Such an objector is projecting the live issues of today onto the screen of seventy-five years ago. The burning question then was not the interpretation of Scripture, but: Is the Bible true or false? Is it the revealed Word of God? One either accepted it all or rejected it all. Lincoln's answer was *Yes*, and in that "yes" there was not only the acceptance of the Apostles' Creed (not always as you or I might state it), but the earnest taking up of the cross to follow a cross-bearing Master. He believed in the cross, both for salvation and for practice.

<sup>3</sup>W. J. Johnstone, *Abraham Lincoln, the Christian*, pp. 190, 191.

## CHAPTER III

### WHENCE HATH THIS MAN WISDOM?

Biographies have a peculiar habit of beginning with an account of ancestors. The human mind has certain cardinal interrogation points: whence? why? whither? So the Bible begins with Genesis—beginnings. The Gospels, though concerning themselves with a “shoot springing from dry soil,” nevertheless trace the ancestry of Jesus. Matthew, after a list of “begetters” and begettees extending from Abraham to Joseph, suddenly stops to tell us that “The birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise”—that is, He was not begotten of man at all, but of the Holy Ghost. But the line of Joseph’s ancestors was royal.

Luke, the democrat, writing of the Son of Man, traces the ancestry clear to “Adam who was of God” that we might all claim blood relationship with Him. But John goes back to the real Genesis—“In the beginning was the word . . . the word was God.” All taken together, explain Jesus Christ.

The ancestry of Abraham Lincoln has been traced back to Samuel Lincoln who in 1638 emigrated from Norwich to Massachusetts; this man was a good Baptist, the President’s father was a Baptist, and therefore, it is reasoned, we are indebted to Samuel Lincoln in large measure for Abraham Lincoln’s faith. Notwithstanding that “grace and truth come by Jesus Christ” direct

to each individual and are not hereditary, much may be said for a religious heritage. The faith which dwells in Grandmother Lois descends to Grandson Timothy. But is it quite fair to the sixty-three other ancestors that were equally related to our world hero, and the thirty-two other ancestors that were much more closely related, to say that Samuel Lincoln was the main contributor of this element of his nature?

Of course religion in the ancestral line has to start somewhere, and it ought to be continuous for a thousand generations, but the chain is far more easily broken than mended. Every link is important, and those nearest to Lincoln should certainly have the greatest credit. Galton's Law for biological inheritance, based on experiments on coat colors of Basset-hounds, states it like this: The two immediate parents contribute one half the characteristics; the four grandparents, one fourth, or one sixteenth each; the preceding generation, one eighth, etc. Have you ever realized that but for intermarriages into the old stock, you have as many ancestors as both your parents put together plus 2; and your children have probably twice as many as you have? Or that to go back ten generations, you have theoretically 1,024 ancestors, and in thirty generations the number is 8,598,094,592, or more than four times the total population of the world?

And yet folks pride themselves on their "family tree," when they should talk of the family labyrinth. Who, by tracing back every ancestral line—not just one—could not find himself related



to William the Conquerer, and likewise to Al Capone? It is easy to make too much of ancestry, for it works both ways.

But let us come to those who were immediately the parents of Lincoln's religious faith. He was blessed with three godly parents: his father, Thomas Lincoln; his mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln; his step-mother, previously a widow, Sarah Bush Johnson Lincoln. Tom Lincoln was a sort of rolling stone that gathered little moss either before or after the birth of his illustrious son, moving from Kentucky to Indiana, later to Illinois, as his pioneer forebears had moved before him. Because he was always poor, historians have rated him accordingly, forgetting his "true riches." In his home there was grace before meals and regular family worship, for his wife had taught him to read. He was a member of the Baptist Church both in Kentucky, and later at Little Pigeon, Indiana where on one occasion at least he was the moderator of a commission appointed to settle a difficulty between two of the church sisters. That appointment would indicate that he was considered a man of some judicious ability.

"All that I am, all that I hope to be, I owe to my angel mother—blessings on her memory," was Lincoln's testimony to the greatness of Nancy Hanks Lincoln. Only for nine years were they together, but in those years she had taught him the Bible stories, and later the Bible chapters with which his mind was saturated. In her dying hour she placed her frail hand on little Abe's head and charged him to be good and kind to his father

and his sister, and to live as she had taught him, loving kindred and worshiping God. There was no one to preach a funeral sermon, and this seems to have weighed on the boy's mind, and some eight or nine months later he wrote what was perhaps his first letter asking an itinerant preacher, the Rev. David Elkin whom he had known in Kentucky, to come and preach a funeral sermon at his mother's grave where the settlers gathered from miles around to do her honor!<sup>1</sup> What those nine years meant! In those distressful years when he was President he said: "I remember her prayers, and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life."

Blessed among women, the sword of hardship and tragedy must have often pierced her heart. We wonder if she sometimes heard the taunt flung at her Master, "Thou wast altogether born in sin," for there was a shadow there. Her grandfather's family settled in what is now West Virginia in 1782. There were four daughters in the family, Betsy, Nancy, Polly and Lucy. While still a child of nineteen years in her father's home, Lucy gave birth to the unwelcome Nancy Hanks of our story. Seven years later the Hanks family moved to Kentucky where the mother of Nancy married, but Nancy was sent to live with her Aunt Betsy Hanks Sparrow by whom she was brought up (here is another unpaid National debt) until she was wooed and won by "Tom" Lincoln.

The name of the father of Nancy Hanks, the seducer of Lucy Hanks, remains unknown—un-

<sup>1</sup>William Thayer, *The Pioneer Boy*, pp. 137-139.

known in both senses of the word. He has escaped the ignominy and shame that were due to his name for his misdeeds. And he missed the glory that might have been his had his child been born in the bonds of holy matrimony. Lincoln confided to his law partner Herndon that his grandfather on his mother's side was a well bred Virginia planter and to him he attributed his own power of analysis, his logic, his mental activity, his ambition, and all those qualities in which he far out-ranked his Hanks and Lincoln kinsmen.<sup>2</sup>

These facts are brought into this narrative, not that they may furnish a tasty morsel of morbid gossip, or for the sake of debunking history, but for the lessons they teach:

First: When God, the master potter, would make a vessel unto honor, He mixes the clays already in existence, not creating new qualifications by divine fiat. Rahab, the harlot of Jericho, with her faith in the scarlet thread, and Ruth, the loyal Moabitess who said, "Where thou diest will I die," must have had something in their make up that God wanted in the royal line of David and David's Lord.

Second: "There is forgiveness with Thee." The fathers eat the sour grapes, but the children's teeth need not be set on edge. There are no illegitimate children; only illegitimate parents. Again and again in history, out of the mouths of these innocent babes and sucklings, Thou hast ordained strength.

Third: We little know how much this tragedy of

<sup>2</sup>Emanuel Hertz, *The Hidden Lincoln*, pp. 73, 74, 411, 412.

life contributed to that which made Lincoln the marvelous character that he was: his tender heartedness, his compassion for the suffering and the erring, his victory of forgiveness—"With malice toward none, with charity for all."

Though the boy Lincoln arranged the funeral for his mother, it remained for Mr. Studebaker of Great Bend, Indiana, to mark the grave, half way between the Lincoln home in Little Pidgeon and the church. The marker reads:

Nancy Hanks  
Mother of President Lincoln  
Died October 5th, A.D. 1818  
Aged 35 years  
Erected by a Friend of Her Martyred Son  
1879

*"It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth."* So said Jeremiah who earned the right to speak.

When the writer of fiction needs to explain a sudden change in the personality or circumstances of any of his characters, he creates an event that might cause such a change. But when God, the author of our lives, would create such a change in us. He too, must introduce some event or personality, not fiction but fact, to work the change. Such a formative event in Lincoln's life was the coming of his step mother, Sarah Bush Johnson.

Tom Lincoln, Abraham's father, has been charged with lethargy, laziness, indolence, cruelty, fondness for shooting deer and wild turkeys while his wife and daughter Sarah and little Abe cul-

tivated the corn and potatoes and carried the water from the spring a mile away. One might think that he had never done a good day's work in his life. But even such critics will have to concede at least one exception. It was the day some thirteen months after the death of Nancy Hanks, when he returned to the old community in Kentucky, called on the widow Johnson—a former sweetheart who had preferred and married and buried his rival—and said something like this:

“I have no wife and you have no husband. I came a purpose to marry you. I knowed you from a gal, and you knowed me from a boy. I have no time to lose, and if you are willing, let it be done straight off.”

Her reply was scarcely more romantic or poetic:

“Tommy, I know you well, and have no objection to marrying you; but I cannot do it straight off, as I owe some debts that must first be paid.”

As the total of these debts was approximately twelve dollars Mr. Lincoln raised his bid accordingly, and the ceremony took place the following morning. That he received full value for his extra investment is evident, since a four horse wagon was necessary to transport the possessions of the bride back to Indiana. Among these possessions was a bureau which had cost forty dollars. “To what purpose was this waste?” Thomas thought it ought to be sold but Sarah thought otherwise, and so they compromised and didn't sell it, the beginning of a series of such compromises, no doubt, as will appear from the transformation in the

Lincoln household. But let us go back.

When Thomas Lincoln sold his farm in Kentucky some three years previously he received in payment \$300, \$20 of which was cash, the balance was in ten barrels of corn whiskey, readily cashable at \$28 per barrel. With these he tried to cross the Ohio river at flood stage but the raft capsized, and all his earnings seemed swept away. However, his fortune was retrieved when the river subsided, and in the second boat he reached the Indiana shore. After securing land for \$2 per acre on Little Pigeon Creek, he returned to Kentucky and brought his family in bleak November. But they arrived in a hired wagon, without livestock or poultry, without anything but a woodsman and carpenter's tools, a rifle, a skillet, a dutch oven, and such articles not too numerous to mention. Between two trees which formed corner posts they built a three-sided pole shed, the fourth side was open, a southern exposure in every sense of the word. In this they huddled together through the winter, while they cleared the ground and built the one room log cabin which was to be the home.

This second residence was not a great improvement over the first. It too had but one room, a dirt floor oozy when wet, no door and not even an opening for a window. It had built-in beds in the corners (poles stuck into the wall at the ends and resting on a forked stick on the fourth corner) with leaves and husks and deerskins thrown over them for a mattress. But Abe's bed was in the loft, reached by climbing on pegs driven into the

wall. The dining table, if it could be called such, was the flat side of a slab supported on four pegs. At least, the furniture was matched. It was on such a bed, in such a crudely fashioned home, that Nancy Hanks Lincoln spent those last weeks of sickness, and her last view of the world as she bade her children farewell could not have given her much hope that their lives would be much rosier than her own had been.

Maybe the heart of the new bride who was to succeed her sank a bit as the four horse wagon drew up before this new home in the wilderness. It could hardly have looked as genteel to her as "Tommy" had pictured it. But at any rate, she accepted the situation, and unloaded her three children and the furniture that was so much more magnificent than anything the Lincoln children had ever seen that the impression was never forgotten. That very night Abe made his first contact with a feather pillow, and a feather bed; such comfort he had never known existed.

But this was only the beginning of improvements to be made. Soon there was a door for the cabin, and then a window with a greased-paper pane; then a board floor. Little Abe's buck-skin shirt gave place to a wool one, and later a whole new outfit. Even the land was better cultivated, and Tom Lincoln who had depended more on his skilled marksmanship with a rifle than on the sweat of his face from use of the hoe, became a better provider.

The schools of this newly opened country were few and far between, with short terms and in-

ferior teachers. Since the scholars prepared their lessons aloud, they called them "blab schools." One term the school was more than four miles away, and the father thought it a waste of time and energy for Sarah and Abraham to walk the nine miles each day for an "edification." But once more his opinion was over-ruled, for the hand that was now holding the throttle belonged to a woman with high cheek-bones and a strong jaw-bone, marks of will power; but she had also clear judgment and a warm and loving heart that could mother two step children with the same care and tenderness that she gave to the three of her own. Thanks to her kindly decision, Abraham Lincoln received almost but not quite twelve months of schooling in his whole life.

I suppose that no two words in the English language have furnished the theme of more tragic jokes than the words *mother-in-law* and *step-mother*. Of course there have been causes. But if the Royal Order of Naomi has done much to redeem the first of these words from abuse, the equally Royal Order of Sarah Bush Johnson Lincoln has redeemed the other. From that first night when his father introduced her "Here is your new mammy, Abe" and her big hands held his head against her skirt until he "felt like a cold chick warming under the soft feathers of big wing" (Sandburg) until the day of his death, he loved her and she returned his love.

Later in life when he had received a large attorney fee, a friend called in his office and found him confronting a pile of money. "Look here,



Judge. See what a heap of money I've got from the ——— case. Did you ever see anything like it? Why I never had so much money in my life before, put it altogether I've got just five hundred dollars; if it were only seven hundred and fifty I would go directly and purchase a quarter section of land, and settle it on my old step mother." The friend offered to loan the deficit, but suggested that he make it revert to himself after her death. "I shall do no such thing," Lincoln replied with feeling. "It is a poor return, at the best. for all the good woman's devotion and fidelity to me, and there is not going to be any half-way business about it." And the deal was closed.

The step-mother did not want him to run for President, fearing that he would be assassinated. Before leaving for the White House he made her a visit, and both seemed to realize it would be their last meeting. After his assassination, his law partner, Herndon, visited her, and with tears in her eyes she said: "Abe was a good boy, and I can say what scarcely one woman a mother in a thousand can say: Abe never gave me a cross word or look, and never refused in fact or appearance to do anything I requested of him. I never gave him a cross word in all my life. His mind and mine—what little I had—seemed to run together. He was a dutiful son to me always. I think he loved me truly. I had a son, John, who was raised with Abe. Both were good boys, but I must say, both now being dead, that Abe was the best boy I ever saw, or expect to see."

## CHAPTER IV

### FORMATIVE BOOKS FOR FORMATIVE YEARS

“A man is judged by the company he keeps.” And why not? Do not “birds of a feather flock together?” These proverbs assume that the man has a wide range of choice from which he selects those most like himself, with either a community of interest with himself or a similarity of character. And if there is not that likeness in the beginning of their association, it surely will develop.

It is equally true that one may be judged by the books he reads. Why not? He selects books as he selects companionships, because he likes the subjects they treat, or the ideals they set forth. Select your books as you select companions. They are formative associates, so choose the best.

God seems to have purposely limited Lincoln's early association with books to the best and most formative ones. Few of the many biographies of Lincoln fail to give the complete list of them (six in all). Heading the list is the Bible, first because it was fundamental and pre-eminent. Before he knew what words were, he heard it read morning and evening at the family altar; not too well read, we may suppose, for the father was scarcely able to read, but nasally intoned in a very provincial dialect. On Sabbath afternoons his mother told him Bible stories and taught him to commit whole chapters to memory. During the several

weeks that he tenderly nursed his mother in her last illness, he read to her from the Bible for hours at a time. How well he knew the Book is manifest, for grown to manhood and practicing law in Springfield, he was called to the bedside of a dying woman to write her will. He invited his young friend, Gilbert J. Greene (later Captain Greene), an eighteen-year-old printer to accompany him. Greene related the story to Charles T. White who relays it to us in his book, *Lincoln the Comforter* from which the story is quoted. (pp. 11-16)

"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."

He also knew the less quoted parts of his Bible. On one occasion a friend was giving him a report of a rump political meeting called by one of Lincoln's enemies, and attended by some four hundred men. Lincoln reached for his Bible and read, "And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men." When the South had been defeated and war penalties for the leaders were being discussed, the bitter-enders were urging hanging. Lincoln's reply was: "What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel?" His mind was permeated with the Bible. Mr. Choate who as a young man was present at Cooper Institute when Lincoln spoke there, recalled in his later years his impressions of that meeting:

“When he spoke, he was transformed; his eye kindled, his voice rang, his face shone and seemed to light up the whole assembly. For an hour and a half he held his audience in the hollow of his hand. His style of speech and manner of delivery were very simple. What Lowell called ‘the grand simplicities of the Bible’ with which he was so familiar, were reflected in his discourse. . . . It was marvelous to see how this untutored man, by mere self-discipline and the chastening of his own spirit, had outgrown all meritricious arts, and found his way to the grandeur and strength of absolute simplicity.”

What marvelous results may come from a traffic accident, even in horse and buggy days! A wagon in which a mother and her two daughters were traveling broke down near the Lincoln home. They might have spent the time fidgeting and pouting over the delay, but instead the woman read to the Lincoln children and her own from the story books she carried. It was a revelation to little Abe of the happiness and wealth of knowledge that could be had from books. This led later to his borrowing and reading every book he could find “within a radius of fifty miles.” He wrote these lines in his school copy book, and they seem to have been prophetic:

“Good boys, who to their books apply,  
Will all be great men by and by.”

The next book providentially put into Abe’s hands was *Pilgrim’s Progress*. His father discovered it in the house of a friend and borrowed it to feed the hungry mind of his son whose eyes sparkled with joy when he saw it. That day he did not eat; that night he did not sleep. As soon as it was finished he began reading it a second time, but before he was through, a woman heard

of his love of reading and gave him a copy of *Aesop's Fables*. This was the first book that he could really call his own, and he made it his own in every sense of the words. He learned the stories, understood the lessons, and best of all, learned the force of parables and stories as teaching material. His father was noted for his story telling ability, but his famous son added the talent of selecting his stories with such aptness to the occasion, that they drove home many an argumentative nail, or warded off an unpleasant crisis in the conversation.

The other members that made up his six-volume book-shelf were *Robinson Crusoe*, *A History of the United States*, and *Weems' Life of Washington*. The last named was borrowed from John Crawford, who thereby wrote his name in history on this wise. The Lincoln homestead was not too rain-proof, and the book got wet, and in the estimation of the owner it was damaged to the extent of seventy-five cents, which amount he allowed the future President to liquidate by three days of hard labor in his cornfield. We may be sure Lincoln saw the funny side of the incident in after years, but even in his laughter there were tears. Perhaps he found temporary satisfaction in writing a poem commemorating the stinginess of the aforesaid Crawford. Thus the evil that men do lives after them.

Moral: If you want to take advantage of a youngster, be careful to select one whose biography will never be written and read so many times as that of Abraham Lincoln. You know of a famous weapon called a *boomerang*.

## CHAPTER V

### HIS FORMATIVE BOOKS

“Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? Whence then hath it tares?” “An enemy hath done this.” So long as Lincoln’s reading was confined in his six volumes which he read again and again, his mind was comparatively free from doubts. But the enemy of all youth, fearing lest choice roots may spring from most unpromising dry places, sends forth his decree to slay all the babes in their infancy. So when young Abraham enlarged his browsing area to a radius of fifty miles, and read everything he found, it is not strange if he found some loco weed.

Much ado has been made about an essay that Lincoln wrote in 1834 concerning Christianity, in which it is claimed by some that he expressed atheistic views. The stories are so conflicting that it would take an expert redactor to dove-tail the stories together, or a Scotland Yard detective to untangle the true and the false. The whole matter might be passed over if it were not the last stronghold of the lie that Lincoln was an infidel. We give both stories, and leave it to the reader to combine them to suit his own taste.

According to one story, Lincoln wrote the essay after reading Thomas Paine’s “Age of Reason” and Volney’s “Ruins of an Empire.” It was to have been read before a literary society, but his friend Sam Hill (you have probably heard the



name before) snatched it from him, tore it in two and put it into the stove. This angered the writer of the essay, but when he had recovered his temper, and his faith perhaps, he thanked Hill for what he had done.

John G. Nicolay, private secretary to the former President says this about it: "Yes, there is a story, and it is probably true, that, when he was very young and very ignorant, he wrote an essay that might be called atheistical. It was after he had been reading a couple of atheistic books which made a great impression on his mind, and the essay is supposed to have expressed his views on those books—a sort of review of them, containing both approval and disapproval—and one of his friends burned it. He was very indignant at the time, but was afterwards glad of it."

According to the other story, the literary society seems to have been "The Spit and Argue Club" that regularly gathered around the stove of New Salem's General Store of which Mr. Hill was the proprietor and Abraham Lincoln an employee, many members of said club being inclined to be broad in their religious views, which views Lincoln had come to tolerate and perhaps to share. The essay, it is alledged, was against Christianity, Jesus Christ and the Bible. It had been read at the store and was being discussed when Mr. Hill forcibly interrupted the proceedings by putting it into the stove. That of course destroyed the evidence so far as historians are concerned, but did not stop argument. On the other hand, it started a new argument whether the essay was

for or against Christianity. We can follow this debate back as far as 1874.

Mentor Graham, a school teacher of New Salem who tutored Abraham Lincoln in English grammar and surveying and with whom Lincoln boarded for two years, had the manuscript in his possession for two weeks and examined it, and tells a very different story as to its contents. He is the only one who claims to have read it or heard it whose testimony we have. This will be discussed in a later chapter. It will be sufficient to say here that he affirms that it was not an attack upon but a defense of Christianity. As for the influence of infidel writers upon Lincoln's faith, Robert Brown, M.D. who was for many years intimate with the President, has this to say in his *Abraham Lincoln and Men of His Time* (Vol. II, p. 426) :

In speaking of Paine's "Age of Reason," he laid it aside, saying: "I have looked through it, carelessly it is true; but there is nothing to such books. God rules this world, and out of seeming contradictions, that all these kind of reasoners seem unable to understand, He will develop and disclose His plans for men's welfare in His inscrutable way. Not all of Paine's nor all the French distempered stuff will make a man better, but worse. They might lay down tons and heaps of their heartless reasonings alongside a few of Christ's sayings and parables, to find that He had said more for the benefit of our race in one of them than there is in all they have written. They might read His Sermon on the Mount to learn that there is more of justice, righteousness, kindness and mercy in it than in the minds and books of all the ignorant doubters from the beginning of human knowledge."

## CHAPTER VI

### LINCOLN'S RELATION TO THE CHURCH

“So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how. The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come.” Those words are a fitting epitome of the life of Abraham Lincoln (and of course of a host of others). But we are thinking now, not of the ripened grain and the sudden thrusting forth of the sickle, but of that time of uncertain waiting, for not all the seeds germinate. Carefully and prayerfully his parents had sown the Word; will it be plucked away before it takes root, will it spring up quickly only to be scorched, or will it be choked later by anxieties and cares, or will it lie inert for a time, or even die in the ground? The husbandman waiteth.

Religious precocity received less encouragement in Lincoln's times. Youth became full communicant church members in their late teens and early twenties, rather than at the age of ten or twelve as now. Lincoln never took that step. But shall we conclude that “God was not in all his thoughts?” Like the fig tree, the fruits of the Spirit—the good works—precede the leaves—the profession of faith. But is fruit not a surer sign

of life than leaves? Not by their leaves, but by their fruits, ye shall know them. For the most of Lincoln's life we shall have to look to the fruits as a testimony to his faith, but these fruits were abundant. But of that later.

Henry C. Deming, member of Congress from Connecticut once asked Lincoln why, with his strong religious character, he had never united with a church, to which he replied.

"I have not 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 qualifications 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 with all my soul."<sup>1</sup>

He gave a similar answer to a similar question of Dr. Gurley, pastor of the church he attended in Washington. Was this just a diplomatic way of declining an invitation he did not wish to accept? How many and just which doctrines would he have included in his "mental reservations" of which he spoke? These are vital questions.

"There is more faith in honest doubt than half the creeds." So says the poet, and if that is true, Lincoln had lots of that kind of faith, for those doubts plagued him most of his life. Perhaps they were aggravated by a touch of bitterness concerning his humble birth, his poverty, and the lone-

<sup>1</sup>Hon. Henry C. Demming before Legislature of Connecticut, June 8, 1865, Eulogy of Lincoln, p. 42.

liness of the days spent in cutting timber or on the journeys down the Mississippi, and by his mental anguish that threatened his sanity over the death of Ann Rutledge, and by his not too happy marriage later to Mary Todd. Moreover he was conscious of a superior mind, a feeling that too often leads youth to discount as unworthy of themselves, the simple faith of their fathers.

Did Lincoln ever overcome these doubts? William H. Herndon, for twenty-five years the law partner of Lincoln, who claims to have known him better than any other man, and who spent the remaining years of his life after the President's assassination, in collecting all the Lincoln papers, and searching for every possible bit of information, sifting and resifting his findings, and whose valuable collection of information every biographer of Lincoln has consulted, classes him both as an atheist (at least in his earlier years) and a theist, and seems willing to allow us to call him anything except a Christian. In short, a reading of Mr. Herndon's letters about Lincoln would seem to indicate that in matters of religion their two minds had but a single thought; what Herndon believed Lincoln believed, no more and no less. The disciple was not above his lord nor *vice versa*. In the same paragraph in which he extols the absolute honesty of Lincoln, a subject of which he never tires (we quote): "yet he was honest, fair, and manly, incapable of falsehood, of base deception, or of fraud, as I think." Just above this he says:

James H. Matheny tells me that from about 1854 to 1860 Lincoln played a sharp game here on the religious

world, that Lincoln knew that he was to be a great man, was a rising man, was looking to the Presidency, etc., and well knowing that the old infidel, if not atheistic, charge would be made and proved against him, and to avoid the disgrace, odium, and unpopularity of it, trampled on the Christian toes, saying: "Come and convert me." The elders, lower and higher members of the churches, including ministers, etc., flocked around him and that he appeared openly to the world as a seeker; that it was noised about that Lincoln was a seeker after salvation, etc., in the Lord, that letters were written more or less all over the land that Lincoln was soon to be a changed man, etc., and thus it was he used the Reverend James Smith of Scotland, old man Bergen, and others. I have often thought that there was something in this, but can't affirm it to be so. This is Matheny's honest opinion, and no man is superior to Matheny's judgments, etc., of human nature, actions, and motives, etc. He knew Lincoln as well as I did, I think. One thing is true, that the said Reverend Dr. Smith of Scotland presented Lincoln with a book written by said doctor; Lincoln brought it to the office, laid it down, never took it up again to my knowledge, never condescended to write his name in it, never spoke of it to me. Never let me know much about his religious aspirations from 1854 to 1860 in the above line, always appeared different, that scorning all Christian views. It is said by someone here that Lincoln told him that he was about converted, but that man—I do not know and can't find out—is said to be a blab, etc. I do not think that Mr. Lincoln was a hypocrite and yet I know he scarcely trusted any man with his more profound secrets. I had read them in his facts, acts, hints, face, as well as what he did not do nor say, however absurd this last expression may appear to be. Mr. Lincoln was a secretive man, had great ambition, profound policies, deep prudences, etc., was retired, contemplative, abstract, as well as abstracted. Lincoln was about as shrewd a man as this world ever had and yet he was honest, fair, and manly, incapable of falsehood, of base deception, or of

fraud, as I think. But you shall have all opinions and all sides and all facts and acts that I can find, and when you have all these you can judge for yourself.

In the above quotation Mr. Herndon admits that from 1854 on, for they had little contact after Lincoln went to the White House, he knew nothing of what Lincoln was thinking along religious lines, and while in another sentence he speaks of him as "incapable of falsehood, of base deception, or of fraud," yet he would rather concede him to have been a hypocrite than a truly converted Christian. Yet it was in the early fifties that Mr. Lincoln through the death of his son, was brought to face the realities of the Christian faith.

That Mr. Herndon took undue liberties in re-vamping Mr. Matheny's conversations before quoting them, to suit his own purposes, will also appear in a later chapter.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE QUEST FOR FAITH

Reading the private letters of William H. Herndon to his co-biographer of Lincoln, Mr. Weik, and others, one could easily get the impression that Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln (nee Mary Todd) spent few happy hours together, to put it mildly, and that Lincoln came to his law office and spent some if not all of his Sabbaths working, frequently bringing the children (whom Herndon didn't love) to make a shambles of the office, while Mrs. Lincoln went to church, not to worship but to display her clothes. Although Herndon thoroughly disliked Mrs. Lincoln, and thoroughly admired her husband, he excused her ill temper to some degree on account of Lincoln's silent, absent-minded, melancholy spirit, still brooding over his long-lost love, Ann Rutledge, of which love affair Mrs. Lincoln's jealous spirit kept her ever conscious. Since Herndon was long and intimately associated with Lincoln, it would be unfair to the cause of truth to brush his opinion entirely aside, simply because we do not like it. Besides, Mr. Herndon tells us that when he asked Lincoln if he would not like to read his newly purchased *Life of Burke*, he was told, "No, I don't want to read it. Biographies as written are false and misleading. The author of the life of his love paints him as a perfect man, magnifies his perfections and suppresses his imperfections, describes the



success of his love in glowing terms, never once hinting at his failures and blunders. Why do not book merchants and sellers have blank biographies on their shelves always ready for sale, so that, when a man dies, if his heirs, children, and friends wish to perpetuate the memory of the dead, they can purchase one already written, but with blanks, which they can fill up eloquently and grandly at pleasure, thus commemorating a lie, an injury to the dying and to the name of the dead?" So come on with your shadows, Mr. Herndon, we will let others daub in the highlights.

Happily we have well qualified witnesses to tell us that Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln attended church together with considerable regularity even in Springfield.

The book of which Mr. Herndon speaks above as "presented" to Lincoln was entitled *The Christian's Defense*. Its author, Dr. James Smith, who had formerly been a pastor in the South, was of some mental caliber and a defender of the faith. A group of infidels had once challenged him to debate with their champion, C. G. Olmstead, at Columbus, Mississippi in the winter of 1839-40. It seems to have been a sort of Joe Lewis contest in which Dr. Smith played the role of the Brown Bomber, figuratively speaking, easily overcoming his antagonist. In response to popular demand Dr. Smith reconstructed and enlarged his argument and published it in two volumes under the title mentioned above. Dr. Smith became pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, Illinois in 1849, but the stories as to how Mr.

Lincoln came into possession of his book vary somewhat, though not seriously enough to disqualify their testimony.

We give first the story of Thomas Lewis, a lawyer in the same law office with Lincoln, his intimate friend during his entire residence period in Springfield, 1837-1861, and an elder in Dr. Smith's church. This is from a paper on "Lincoln's Views of the Bible," read before the Old Men's Association of the Y.M.C.A. of Kansas City, of which he was president. (He was living in that city at the time—November 10, 1898):

During the fifties Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln visited her uncle in Kentucky. On their return I called on him. At that time he remarked that "while at my wife's uncle's I got hold of a book entitled *Smith on Infidelity*, written by your Dr. Smith (meaning the Rev. James Smith, D.D.) I read it about half through, and it has given me different views of the Bible from those I have ever entertained, and I want to get that book and finish reading it. Can you help me to get it?" I replied by saying: "Yes, I heard the Doctor say a few days since he had sold his last book, and I have no doubt that some who have read it would be willing to part with it for the \$5 they had paid for it." Said he, "As long as the Doctor has been here, I have not made his acquaintance. I wish you would see him, have him get a book, bring him around, and give me an introduction." I saw the Doctor. He procured the book. The next day I went with him to Mr. Lincoln's office and gave the introduction. After an hour of pleasant conversation we left. I went out first, the Doctor following. As the Doctor passed out, the door partly closed; he reopened it, and said, "Mr. Lincoln, if agreeable, I should like to see you in our church some day." "Dr. Smith," said Lincoln, "I will be there next Sunday." Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln were in the church; and the following Sunday they were there also.

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 into 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."<sup>1</sup>

This testimony ought to be carefully weighed over against Mr. Herndon's opinion to the contrary. Possibly each was at least a little prejudiced toward his side of the case. However, if a second testimony from the same witness written twenty-five years earlier adds any additional weight, it is furnished by the following letter:

Springfield, January 6, 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,

THOMAS LEWIS

<sup>1</sup>Daily Illinois State Register, December 10, 1898.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HIS QUESTION ANSWERED

A variation of the book story given above comes to us by way of a Lincoln's birthday address delivered by the Rev. William Bishop, D.D. in Salina, Kansas in 1897. Dr. Bishop graduated from Illinois College of Jacksonville (thirty-five miles from Springfield). He first met Dr. Smith at the commencement exercises of this college in 1850. In that year he became an instructor in the college and the acquaintance ripened into friendship, and the friendship was nurtured by correspondence after he left the institution in 1852. From this point we quote directly from Dr. Bishop's address as given in the local paper:

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 in 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 scouged in the narrow space between the pews. My stage fright," however, was soon very much relieved, by his kindness 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 strict translation from the Greek is, "Atheists in the World." 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 (now 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 serv-

ices 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 Defense*) 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 revela-

tion. 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.”<sup>1</sup>

The above declaration by Dr. Smith was made in September, 1857.

The intimacy and mutual high esteem between these two friends, Mr. Lincoln and Dr. Smith is shown by a statement of Peter Van Bergen. Smith said, “Lincoln you are a rising man. You will be President yet.” “If I am ever President I’ll banish you to Scotland,” was Lincoln’s reply. When the first prophecy was fulfilled, Dr. Smith must have called for the fulfillment of the second, for the President early appointed Dr. Hugh Smith, the younger son of Dr. James Smith to the consulate at Dundee, Scotland, and the minister and his wife having reached the age when they could retire, returned to the land of his birth with their son. The son soon returned to America and the father was appointed consul in his stead, a position held until his death in 1871.

Mr. Herndon wrote to Dr. Smith concerning Lincoln’s conversion, specifying some particular questions he wished to have answered concerning Lincoln’s faith. His reply follows:

<sup>1</sup>Salina Newspaper.



East Cainne, Scotland  
24th January, 1867

W. H. Herndon, Esq.

Sir—Your letter of the 20th of December 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 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 preeminently 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 dia-

bolical 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.

JAMES 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.<sup>2</sup>

Herndon says the letter evaded his questions "about miraculous conception, etc." But Dr. Smith may have had his reasons. Herndon's opinions were pretty well crystalized before his investigations began.

In writing to the Rev. James A. Reed, December 24, 1872, Ninian W. Edwards says:

A short time after the Rev. Dr. Smith became pastor

<sup>2</sup>Rev. James A. Reid, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Springfield, Illinois, *The Later Life and Religious Sentiments of Abraham Lincoln*, Scribner's Monthly Magazine, July, 1873, p. 333.

of the First Presbyterian Church in this city Mr. Lincoln said to me, "I have been reading a work by Dr. Smith on the evidences of Christianity, and have heard him preach and converse on the subject, and I am convinced of the truth of the Christian religion."<sup>3</sup>

He spoke a half truth who said, "Man was not made in the image of God, but he made God in his own image," else why has our race changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of corruptible man, four footed beasts and creeping things? And in turn, their corruptible gods gave them over (betrayed them) unto vile passions, and to do the things that are unseemingly.

It is likewise true that we both make our heroes in our own image, and our heroes make us over into their image. It is going to make a vast difference whether the world accepts Herndon's opinion that Lincoln never had been a Christian nor ever became one, or whether on the other hand we accept the opinion of the several ministers, Dr. Smith, Dr. Bishop, Dr. Gurley and a host of others who also knew Lincoln in his last years. Suppose for the moment, that these men did read their own religious faith into the mind of Lincoln, make him in their own image, what shall we say of Herndon? What was his religion? Let himself state it. First we quote from his letter to Weik, co-biographer of Lincoln:

My ambition was not for office, nor money nor fame. My ambition in this life was to be an intelligent man, and a doer of good to my fellow-man. Today I am a progressive and an advanced little thinker, a reformer, an optimist, an altruist, believing in an infinite Energy,

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Universal Soul, God, in inspiration, revelation—sons of God. I am credulous to this extent, am broad and generous in my views. This infinite energy has no *pets*, rules mind and matter by laws, absolute, universal, and eternal. Now you have my philosophy and religion. I am today under my beliefs a contented and a happy man, and always have been and expect, hope, to remain so.<sup>4</sup>

This is strangely like the religious views he repeatedly ascribes to Lincoln. But let us read also his letter to Ward H. Lamon, another biographer of Lincoln:

I send you the Rev. Dr. Smith's letter from Scotland, giving me "goss". . . . Smith's letter is simply folly, bombast, etc., and what he says of Lincoln's religion, the Bible, etc., means nothing. It is too general in its expression; he might say the same things of me speaking generally, and yet it wouldn't express my ideas at all, nor my philosophy, nor my religion. I believe that the Bible is the revelation of God, and that Jesus was the son of God, and so do I believe that the Declaration of Independence is the revelation of God and George Washington a son of God. I can talk a week to technical Christians and they will assume that I mean so and so when I don't mean *so and so*. Glittering generalities won't do. I believe in miracles, think a man is a miracle, and God's greatest miracle, believe in miraculous conception, think your conception was a miraculous one. Generalities won't do. Read my letter to Smith and notice the questions closely. Then read Smith's letter to me and watch the answers closely and you will see that he answered no question. About miraculous conception he said no word. In fact he made no specific answer to anything. He knew I would prove him false if he should be precise, so he dealt in generalities.<sup>5</sup>

Well, no doubt we need Herndon to balance Smith, and Smith to counteract Herndon. Emer-

<sup>4</sup>Emanuel Hertz, *The Hidden Lincoln*, p. 135.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 78.

son might have called it the diastole and systole of public thought. Carlyle might have explained it as the *eternal Yea, and the eternal Nay*. But at least we can follow both so far as they agree, and all agree that Abraham Lincoln doubted part of the teaching of the Bible until he was forty years of age. He would be a rare doubter indeed, howsoever honest his doubts might be, who before his feet are taken from the fearful pit and the miry clay and set upon the Rock, walks with the unwavering steadfastness of one whose goings have been established. Lincoln sometimes wavered.

## CHAPTER IX

### HIS FAULTS AND VIRTUES

A story concerning Lincoln that we have always loved runs like this. Just before a Cabinet meeting, one of the members started to tell a story, but paused to remark, "I believe there are no ladies present." Lincoln interrupted with, "No, but there are gentlemen here," and the story was never finished. It would be too bad even to cast doubt on such a story, but we wish it could be said that such was his standard of purity always. Lincoln himself realized that not all of his multitudinous anecdotes were fit to print, for when a listener once suggested that he ought to publish a book of them, he replied in unprintable language that the stench of such a book would be unbearable.

Some writers seek to cover these blemishes by saying that Lincoln was just so pure in his thoughts that he never recognized the distinction between the mentionable and the unmentionable, the vulgar and the refined. It is true that he grew up in a community where the line was not too clearly drawn, and where the stronger expression was usually given the benefit of the doubt. These unpleasant facts are mentioned, not to "debunk" a deservedly popular hero, but for the same reason that the few flaws in another famous Abraham are recounted: first, for the sake of truth; and again, that we might remember

that there never was but one flawless human, and He was more than human. If any of us should ever attain that pinnacle of fame where the sands of time would be sifted for every bit of conversation ever spoken, would all the thoughts we let pass our lips bear inspection? Now don't say I didn't warn you.

Yet in all the siftings of the sands by the Lincoln archaeologists, let it be said, no profanity has been discovered in the Lincoln Lexicon, unless we count "by Jinks" as a profane oath. In the early days of the war a young officer attached to the White House service lost his life. Lincoln's letter of condolence to the parents bears testimony to his high valuation of clean speech and clean living: "In the untimely loss of your noble son our affliction here is scarcely less than your own. . . . My acquaintance with him began less than two years ago; yet, through the latter half of the intervening period, it was as intimate as the disparity of our ages and my engrossing engagements would permit. To me he appeared to have no indulgences or pastimes, and I never heard him utter a profane or intemperate word. . . . In the hope that it may be no intrusion on the sacredness of your sorrow, I have ventured to address you this tribute to the memory of my young friend and your brave and early fallen child."

It is a great tribute to the excellence of Lincoln's virtues that the public has been so ready to forget his short-comings, and even to expurgate the unseemly things he may have said, and to at-

tribute to him qualities he may not have possessed, sayings he did not say, and deeds he didn't do. It is the mysterious working of that law that "to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance, but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have." Thus virtue draws a bonus.

Lincoln had his faults, more faults, and more glaring faults that his worshiping multitudes realize. But he had virtues, not unusual ones perhaps, but to an unusual degree: "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees . . ." It is the excess that counts. The Valedictorian may lead the class by only a fraction of one per cent but what a difference that narrow margin of excellence makes! Many go the first mile that common decency compels; but few go the second mile, the voluntary mile that wins admiration and love, and that makes an indelible impression on the memory. "Honest Abe" they called him. Were all his neighbors dishonest, so that he had a monopoly on the honorary title? No, many of them had done virtuously, but he excelled them all. They slew their thousands of petty temptations, he his tens of thousands.

Maud Royden has written concerning "Pagan Virtues and Christian Graces." She uses the word pagan as meaning non-Christian people; and their common virtues are morality, honesty, courage, loyalty, magnanimity, wisdom and justice; not that all non-Christians possess all of these, but they admire them and possess some of them. But such Christian graces as humility, forgiveness,



and non-resistance are less highly esteemed. Peter's loyal, desperate, but futile resistance to arrest with his sword is favorably contrasted with Jesus surrendering Himself without protest. Even those who commend the conduct of Jesus often despise the Christian who attempts to imitate Him. But the Christian's failure to win approval, thinks Dr. Royden, is due too often to his failure to have the foundation of pagan virtues on which to build Christian graces. To illustrate, Solomon's temple had a porch supported by two pillars called Jachin (He shall establish) and Boaz (In it is strength) "And upon the top of the pillars lily work: so was the work of the pillars finished." Lily work of itself could never support the weight; it is but the adornment added to the everlasting granite,—the finishing touch of the artist. Neither can Christian graces make for strong character unless underneath are the fundamental everlasting virtues. Tolerance is commendable when one has the truth to meet the heresy and the courage to utter it. The humility of Uriah Heap is despicable when it is just a vine to cover up the crumbling pillar of his decaying character.

But the term "Pagan Virtues" is a misnomer; there are none. Dr. Royden denounced "the dreadful doctrine that has been developed by a certain type of Christian, called 'the total depravity of man.'" She says that Jesus "assumes that most people are decent people." Fathers, by and large, give good gifts to their children, not stones or scorpions. Shepherds seek for their lost sheep, the

average citizen leads his horse to water, or helps his ass out of the pit, even on the Sabbath. "Christ never suggested that human beings were altogether evil and must be entirely changed if they are to be Christians, but rather assumes that most people are decent people."

Like most denouncers of the doctrine, Dr. Royden seems not to have understood "Total Depravity." It does not mean the total annihilation of virtue in every individual, but it is total as extending to every member of the human race. It does not mean "that all men are equally wicked, nor that any man is as thoroughly destitute of all moral virtues as it is possible for a man to be. The Scriptures recognize the fact which experience abundantly confirms, that men to a greater or less degree, are honest in dealings, kind in their feelings, and beneficent in their conduct. Even the heathen, the Apostle teaches us, do by nature the things of the law. They are more or less under the dominion of conscience, which approves or disapproves their moral conduct. All this is perfectly consistent with the Scriptural doctrine of total depravity, which includes the entire absence of holiness; the want of due apprehension of the divine perfections, and of our relation to God as our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, Governor and Redeemer. There is common to all men a total alienation of the soul from God so that no unrenewed man either understands or seeks after God; no such man ever makes God his portion, or God's glory the end of his being. The apostasy from God is total

or complete.”<sup>1</sup> This quotation from Dr. Charles Hodge shows that those who hold to the doctrine of “total depravity” also hold the doctrine of “Common Grace.” That is, that the Holy Spirit is a light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, that this Spirit rarely ceases to strive with any and every man. Only those who become reprobate are devoid of His influence.

To speak of pagan virtues borders on blasphemy. All virtues are the work of God’s Spirit. There is “common grace” as distinguished from “saving grace,” but all men partake of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, purchased on the cross of Calvary. “He ascended on high, and gave gifts unto men.” Total depravity and common grace are supplementary doctrines.

But how does this digression concern the faith of Abraham Lincoln? In this way: Dr. Smith says that when death first came to the Lincoln home in 1849, there came a change in the life of Lincoln. Lincoln speaks of a new realization of need when his son Willie died in 1862, and of the change that resulted. On another occasion he spoke of the change that occurred in his life on visiting the battlefield of Gettysburg. Which of these or whether any of these was the “new birth,” or whether this occurred earlier in his life, or never occurred at all, is best known to Him “who shall count when he writeth up the people, *that this man was born there.*” All of these events were relatively late in his life, but many of Lincoln’s good qualities were manifest long

<sup>1</sup>Charles Hodge, D.D., Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 233, 234.

before; should they therefore be called "pagan virtues"? By no means! From a child he knew the Scriptures, Pilgrim's Progress, godly parents, a father's and two mothers' prayers, and from these influences he was never entirely free. God gave him "common grace" to an uncommon degree. God's influence is not limited to His Redeemed; it is active in promoting good and restraining evil in every human being, and to Him be the glory for all that Lincoln was!

It was once said of a certain man: "His one virtue was that he had no very serious faults, and his great fault was that he had no remarkable virtues," a featureless character. This could not be said of Lincoln; he had both faults and virtues and they were as emphatically prominent as the features of his unforgettable face. The immediately following chapters will concern his virtues, virtues that were the result of his early Christian training. Surely no one would say that they came to him through his scepticism.

## CHAPTER X

### HONEST ABE

Honesty, absolute honesty, is an elusive quality. It adroitly escapes so many of us that when one man in ten thousand closely approaches it, his neighbors dub him "Honest John" or "Honest Abe" as the case may be. That is a frank confession on the part of the rest of us that we are not just quite honest. Like the poet we may say:

"And I claim  
Though I aim  
To be honest and true,  
Yet I sometimes lie,  
Don't you?"

It was while he was employed in Offutt's store in New Salem, Illinois that the name "Honest Abe" was first given. Whether it began on that evening now so famous in biography if not in history, when Lincoln closed the store early and walked two miles into the country to restore to a woman customer of the day, a six and a fraction cents overcharge, due to a mistake in addition, we do not know. If so, it might seem to have been a marvelous bargain in reputation—so much for so little. Even so, the upkeep on such a reputation is a constant expense.

For instance, Lincoln and a man named Berry bought a store from James Rutledge in New Salem in 1832. Lincoln's reputation for honesty

seems to have been about all the capital they had to put into it. Lincoln's note was accepted in part payment, and Berry's note covered the unpaid balance. Perhaps Lincoln spent too much time reading a law book that had come into his possession, and in surveying, and too little in attending to the business of the store, and perhaps Berry spent too much time at the spigot of the whiskey barrel, but at any rate the firm's business was soon in the hands of the creditors. When Berry later defaulted on his note Lincoln went to James Rutledge and offered to pay half of Berry's note, but the latter utterly refused, saying that he had accepted the note for the debt and if he could not take it out of Berry, he would not accept it at all.<sup>1</sup> The other creditors must have been harder to deal with, for Lincoln was sixteen years in settling all the accounts, paying the last of them out of his congressional salary. He later spoke of his experience as "paying the national debt."

One of the secrets of Lincoln's reputation for honesty lies in his method of dealing with other folks' money; he never mixed it with his own. In 1833 he was appointed postmaster in New Salem on a small salary, and continued in the office until it was closed by the Post Office Department. Years later while he was practicing law in Springfield, an agent of the Department came to his office inquiring for Abraham Lincoln. When he said he had come to collect a balance due the Department, one of Lincoln's friends, noticing the shadow of perplexity crossing his face,

<sup>1</sup>Letter of R. B. Rutledge quoted in *The Hidden Lincoln*, p. 313.

said, "Lincoln, if you are in want of money, let us help you." Without replying, Lincoln suddenly arose and pulled a trunk out from a pile of books, and turning to the agent asked how much was the amount. The sum of seventeen dollars plus was named. Lincoln opened the trunk, took out some coins wrapped in a cotton rag, and counted out the exact sum. Through all the years he had not removed the neighbor's landmark.

How carefully he followed this method through his life is evident from the following extract from a letter of Lincoln's law partner, Herndon, to Weik, Herndon's amanuensis, when writing his biography of Lincoln, dated January 7, 1888:

While Mr. Lincoln and I were partners, we kept no books as to our partnership, though we did, for a while, as to others. Mr. Lincoln did most of the circuit court business while I stayed at the office. Sometimes I went on the circuit and, if I were with Lincoln around in the counties, all the money collected by us was instantly divided. If I were not on the circuit, was at the office attending to our affairs at home, Lincoln would collect monies due us and our fees on the circuit and divide it, putting his half in his pocketbook and using it as he wanted to; he would wrap my half up in a roll, putting my name on a slip of paper and then wrapping it, the slip, around the roll of money and then putting it in his pocketbook and when he came home he would come to the office and hand me my money; he did this always and at last it so excited my curiosity that I asked him this question: "Why, Lincoln, are you so particular in this matter?" to which he instantly replied: "Well, Billy, I do it for various reasons: first, unless I did as I do I might forget that I collected money or had money belonging to you; secondly, I explain to you how and from whom I got it so that you have not to dun the men who

paid; thirdly, if I were to die you would have no evidence that I had your money and you could not prove that I had it. By marking the money it becomes yours and I have not in law or morality a right to use it. I make it a practice never to use any man's money without his consent first obtained. So you see why I pursue this course and now what do you think of this method with reasons?" and to which I replied: "It is all right, Mr. Lincoln, but so far as I am concerned, you need not be so particular. I know it's all right anyway with you."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



## CHAPTER XI

### PROFESSIONAL HONESTY

Honesty in money matters is but one of the battle fronts in that everlasting war of the conscience against the flesh. Every occupation has temptations peculiar to itself, and consequently has developed a moral code for itself. Somewhere between the High Road of Idealism and the Low Road of Chicanery the Middle Road of Sophistry or Practicability is always under construction, so that even horsethieves have their code of honor and their professional ethics. It is no secret that lawyers, generally speaking, do not rate high in public estimation for their honesty. This is partly due to the popular opinion that every one involved in a lawsuit is either right or he is wrong—one side is black, the other is white. Therefore the attorneys on one side or the other must be contending for the triumph of wrong against right. That is merely snap judgment. The lawyer, with truer insight into human nature, looks upon a lawsuit as an effort to settle honest differences of opinion concerning the facts and what ought to be done about them. Each side may be partly in the right, partly in the wrong—both are gray, light or dark. Lawyers are not merely racketeers, taking advantage of a bad situation to obtain a fat fee, but public benefactors endeavoring to prevent injustice. However, this profession does offer generous wages to the shy-

ster, and the shysters have given lawyers in general an unsavory reputation.

Lincoln was beset with the temptations peculiar to his profession. But he did not find them irresistible. To a young man who sought his advice about taking up the law as a profession but feared it would ruin his character, Lincoln explained that his ideas concerning the profession were quite mistaken and tried to give him a better understanding of what a lawyer's work is, but ended the interview by advising him that if he still felt doubtful about the honesty of the work, by all means not to take it as his life work.

It was difficult for this young man to see how an honest lawyer would be willing to be employed on either one of the two sides of a law case. Must it not require considerable rationalizing? But to a lawyer, both sides are partly wrong, the right lies somewhere between them, the exact point to be determined by law. For instance, Lincoln foreseeing a lawsuit between the Chicago and Alton Railroad and Sangamon County in which there would be worthwhile fees on both sides, first offered his services to his county as having the prior right, and advised them to employ him before the railroad bid for that privilege. They didn't, so he solicited the railroad and they did. But Lincoln was not open to employment on either side of each and every case whether good or bad. Lord Charnwood who wrote his biography of Lincoln for the British public—*Abraham Lincoln*—has this to say on that point:

The Illinois advocate was not all the time pleading the

cause which he was employed to plead, and which if it was once offered to him it was his duty to accept; he was the personal adviser of the client whose cause he pleaded, and within certain limits he could determine whether the cause was brought at all, and if so whether he should take it up himself or leave it to another man. The rule in such matters was elastic and practice varied. Lincoln's practice went to the very limit of what is permissible in refusing legal aid to a cause he disapproved. Coming into court he discovered suddenly some fact about his case which was new to him but which would probably not have justified an English barrister in throwing up his brief. The case was called; he was absent; the judge sent to his hotel and got back a message: "Tell the judge I'm washing my hands." One client received advice much to this effect: "I can win your case; I can get you \$600. I can also make an honest family miserable. But I shall not take your case, and I shall not take your fee. One piece of advice I will give you gratis: Go home and think seriously whether you cannot make \$600 in some honest way." And this habit of mind was beyond his control. Colleagues whom he was engaged to assist in cases agreed that if a case lost his sympathy he became helpless and useless in it. This, of course, was not the way to make money; but he got along and won a considerable local position at the bar, for his perfect honesty in argument and in statement of fact was known to have won the confidence of the judges, and a difficult case which he thought was right elicited the full and curious powers of his mind.<sup>1</sup>

If all lawyers were as frank and open in stating their case as Lincoln was in his first case before the Supreme Court of Illinois, the reputation of the profession at large would quickly be redeemed. He addressed the court as follows:

"Your Honor: This is the first case I have ever had

<sup>1</sup>Lord Charnwood, Abraham Lincoln, chapter 4, section 3.

in this court, and I have examined it with great care. As the court will perceive by looking at the abstract of the record, the only question in the case is one of authority. I have not been able to find any authority sustaining my side of the case, but I have found several cases directly in point on the other side. I will now give the citations, and then submit the case.”<sup>2</sup>

Had we had the privilege of creating our hero, we would have chosen to make him blameless of ever having upheld the questionable side of any case in court, but from our very distant layman’s point of view, he sometimes transgressed. The Armstrong case is an instance.

The defendant in the case was William D. Armstrong, son of Jack and Hannah Armstrong, who had been long-time intimate friends of Lincoln. Strangely enough, this friendship began with a wrestling match between Jack and Abe, the respective champions of the rival communities of New Salem and Clary’s Grove. The friendship grew with the years and Lincoln made their home his leisure time hang out, rocking the babies and doing chores in general, while Hannah did his mending and such things as a bachelor brother might need.

Jack was dead before William, one of the babies whom Lincoln had rocked, came to trial for a brutal murder of a man named Metzgar near the whiskey wagon that did business a half mile from the Camp Meeting in Mason County in 1857. Norris, Armstrong’s accomplice, had already been convicted in Mason County and to escape the strong prejudice, this case was

<sup>2</sup>Emanuel Hertz, *The Hidden Lincoln*, p. 432.

transferred to Cass County Court. Hannah appealed to her old time friend to come and save her son. Lincoln learned from the previous trial that the main witness for the prosecution had testified that he had seen the murderers clearly by the light of the almost full moon. After this same evidence and other very damaging testimony had all been given and the case closed, Lincoln in his appeal to the jury called for an almanac, and one was produced which showed that the new moon had already set some time before the murder occurred. The almanac seems to have been for the previous year, and the moon on the night of the murder was in reality nearly full and did not set until an hour or so after the murder. Lamon implies that Lincoln had "planted" this older almanac with intent to deceive. This evidence out of the way, and prejudice against fraudulent testimony having supplanted it, the jury's hearts were quite open to the very touching picture Lincoln drew of the benevolent hospitality of the old home where the now departed father and this sweet-faced gray-haired mother had been father and mother to the very lonely boy who was now pleading for the life of the son whom he had rocked in the cradle. The jury retired to dry their tears and write ballots of acquittal.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps Lincoln was within the ethics of his profession of those days but it is unlikely that any amount of money would have bribed him to defeat the ends of justice, but "Love is stronger than death." It all goes to show how subtle the

<sup>3</sup>Ward H. Lamon, *Life of Lincoln*, pp. 326-331.

Tempter can be when there is a big prize at stake.

But that even the most honest criminal lawyer may be ensnared into questionable practice appears in this letter of Herndon to Weik.

About the year 1850 a man was indicted in Coles County in this State for hog stealing. The man was poor and was unable to employ a lawyer. The tide of public feeling was against the man. The court asked the man when brought to the bar to plead: "Are you guilty or not guilty?" "Not guilty," spoke the man quickly. "Who is your attorney?" said the Court. The man said: "I have none and am too poor to employ one." "In that case," responded the Court, "I will appoint you one. Have you any preferences among the members of the bar?" "I have," replied the man promptly, "I'll take that long tall man sitting there," pointing to Lincoln. The Court promptly appointed Lincoln to defend the hog thief. Lincoln, whose sympathies were always for the underdog, willingly undertook to defend the man. In order to defend the case well, Lincoln got leave of the Court to take his client in the back room, in order to see what the man's defense really was. Mr. Lincoln and his client sat down, and Mr. Lincoln said to the thief: "What is your defense, that is, what are the facts of the case?" The thief said: "I have no facts to tell you, Mr. Lincoln. The truth is, we'll jump in and fight 'em on general principles and you'll clear me as I know you can." "This is curious. What, have you no facts to tell me? Here are a half-dozen witnesses on the back of this indictment who will swear against you and state that you stole the hogs," said the attorney. "Well, I can't help that," said the criminal. "But," said Lincoln, "this is curious, mysterious; how is it that you will tell me nothing and will not say guilty nor not guilty! It's curious indeed." The thief said: "It may be curious, mysterious, to you, but it is not to me; it's all right to me, it is, it's clear, clear as gunshot." The man was very calm and yet he had a peculiar quiz on his face, something that spoke more than words, something

that meant certainty, confidence in his acquittal. Lincoln moved awhile and scratched his head; he saw something funny in the case, but did not know where it came in. Lincoln was determined to find out the point and run the case through to the end. The man and his attorney returned into court and pleaded: "Not guilty." A jury was called and the trial proceeded. All the witnesses swore on the witness stand that the defendant stole the hogs and sold them to various persons. Here some of the jury was a little uneasy, looking here and looking there. The prosecuting attorney opened the case; it was a plain case of hog stealing and no doubt to all reasonable minds. About the time that the prosecuting attorney was to end his opening speech, the criminal leaned over to Lincoln and said: "Pitch in, go it on general principles with a whoop and a yell. I'll be cleared, *you bet.*" Lincoln was amused very much and yet he kept his own secrets, he was determined to understand the man's calmness and certainty of acquittal. Lincoln arose and ran over the evidence quickly; he saw that all the jury were intent on every word he said; he likewise noticed that the jury paid no attention to the prosecuting speech, and those facts puzzled Lincoln more and more, and yet he was determined to see the end and where the pin came in. The prosecuting attorney, after Lincoln had ended his sympathetic and eloquent speech, made a short reply in conclusion. Mr. Lincoln then asked the Court to give this instruction: "If the jury on all the evidence in this case have any reasonable doubts of the defendant's guilt, they will find the defendant not guilty." The Court gave the instruction as asked. The case was plain, at least plain enough for reasonable people. The jury retired and was gone out to *deliberate* on their verdict for an hour or so. All was suspense and anxiety in the courtroom. At last the jury told the sheriff that they were ready to give in their verdict. The sheriff led the jury to the jury bench; they took their seats, were called and each answered to his name. All twelve answered. "You found your verdict?" The jury all answered: "We have."

The verdict was handed up to the clerk to read aloud. All was suspense and anxiety when the clerk read out aloud: "We the jury find the defendant not guilty." The prosecuting attorney quickly sprang to his feet and said to the jury: "Is this your verdict, gentlemen?" and all said: "It is our verdict, one and all." The prosecuting attorney made a motion for a new trial, which was denied as a matter of course on many grounds. This case, the conduct of the prisoner, his manner, his speech and certainty of acquittal, together with the verdict of the jury, puzzled and bothered Lincoln terribly; he could not understand it at all and no one in the court house did, except the criminal and the jury. Lincoln was so anxious to know the inner secrets, the whole inside of the case, the facts, that he took the man out of the court house and walked away from the hearing of every person. When they were seated Lincoln said: "Mr. ——, I do not understand this case at all but would like to know the inside of it, the whole facts of it, inside and outside from top to bottom." "Why, Lincoln, you did understand it, you went in on general principles and cleared me; is not that good evidence that you understood the case well and truly and did your duty?" Mr. Lincoln still insisted on knowing the facts and said: "Come, let me have no fooling now." . . . The man at last said: "Well, Lincoln, my good fellow, I'll tell you. I did steal the hogs and more of 'em than I was indicted for, many more, and sold 'em to my neighbors, the jury; they knew that if I was convicted that they would have to pay for the hogs that I sold 'em, as they belonged to Mr. —— and Mr. ——, and the jury knew it from the evidence. Now, Lincoln, do you see where the joke comes in? I knew that I would be cleared; didn't I tell you so?" Lincoln was astonished at the fellow and his story; he, L., used to tell the story on circuit with great gusto and to the delight of his brother attorneys of the bar. Lincoln would laugh over the story most heartily, saying: "That case beat me, badly, more than any I ever had."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Emanuel Hertz, *The Hidden Lincoln*, pp. 432-434.



## CHAPTER XII

### HIS MORAL FIBER TESTED

Character is often spoken of as *moral fiber*. It is a good simile, for if we think of life as a fabric, the long threads, the warp, are the ideals and purposes; the daily habits; the long, long thoughts; the affections that stretch from end to end of life. The cross threads, the woof, is made up of the daily events, expected and unexpected, that go in and out among the warp threads, yet do not break them, but rather strengthen them by binding them together, and by giving their color, make the whole a thing of beauty.

Or character is like the fiber of a tree, extending from its roots to the tip of its uttermost branches, enabling it to stand against the fiercest storms, or patiently hold its long limbs unsaggingly horizontal through the stillness of uneventful days and nights, though unobserved. Happy is the life whose moral fibers do not break under the heaviest tests and strains. Lincoln's moral fiber didn't break, even under the severe tests of his profession. He kept his purpose true, to deal justly, and it followed as the night the day, that he could not then be false to any man.

How differently two lawyers may regard their profession as to its chief end may be illustrated by a comparison of Lincoln and Logan drawn by Herndon:

From 1836 to 1861 Mr. Lincoln met at the bar such

men as Judge Logan, the very type and style of a circuit court, a *nisi prius* lawyer, a little shiveled-up man, a thoroughly read man in all the departments of the law, quick as lightning and as technical as technicality itself; he was the best circuit court *nisi prius* lawyer on the circuit; he could gain a case where no other man could, unaccommodating in his practice, cold, ungenerous, snappy, irritable, fighting like a game fowl every point of his case, and when whipped at this point, he would grumblingly fall back on his next point, unlike Lincoln who only made one point and that was the turning point of the case. Logan fought a five-cent case just as energetically and as well as he fought one for ten thousand dollars, rather better because such a big pile of money broke him down through fear of losing the case. Judge McLean, one of the judges of the Supreme Court of the United States, said: "Judge Logan is the very best *nisi prius* lawyer whom I ever saw"; he is the best one that I ever saw. When you got into a case on one side and Logan was on the other side, you knew that you would be defeated, if there was any defeat in your case, and possibly, very possibly, you would be defeated right or wrong. This little dried and shriveled-up man was a terror to the profession, and it is my opinion that he lived and died, died rich too, without a warm friend in the world outside of his own family. Such was the Honorable Stephen T. Logan. On the other hand, if you met Lincoln on a case and you on one side and Mr. Lincoln on the other, you knew that you met a broad-minded and liberal gentleman, honest, fair, and that you would be defeated if you ought to be; such was Abraham Lincoln in this sphere of his activities.<sup>1</sup>

Another paragraph from the same monograph tells of Lincoln's counsel to a man who was about to become justice of the peace, and who must have had a fellow-feeling for young Solomon when he asked for wisdom, pleading his youth and inex-

<sup>1</sup>Emanuel Hertz, *The Hidden Lincoln*, pp. 430, 431.

perience: "For who is able to judge this Thy so great a people?"

A gentleman by the name of Colonel King who lived about eight miles east of Springfield, Illinois, was elected a justice of the peace for Sangamon County, and, having great confidence in Mr. Lincoln's judgment as to well-settled law practice, came into the office one day, soon after he was elected justice, and asked Lincoln how he should act in that capacity and how best to form his own judgments. In answer to this question of calling Mr. Lincoln said: "There is no mystery in this matter, King; when you have a case between neighbors before you, listen well to all the evidence, stripping yourself of all prejudice, if any you have, and throwing away if you can all technical law knowledge, hear the lawyers make their arguments as patiently as you can, and after the evidence and the lawyers' arguments are through, then stop one moment and ask yourself: What is justice in this case? and let that sense of justice be your decision. Law is nothing else but the best reason of wise men applied for ages to the transactions and business of mankind." This gives us an idea as to the methods of Lincoln in forming his own opinions.<sup>2</sup>

Another paragraph of this same monograph brings out how Lincoln's frankness and fairness impressed both judges and jury, and helped in winning many a case by the very favorable impression they made. We quote:

It has been asked me repeatedly: "By what power, by what means, was it that Mr. Lincoln got such a firm hold on courts, juries, and lawyers?" When Mr. Lincoln entered court he spoke to all persons in a polite way, calling them by some very familiar name, addressing the Court in his best and kindest manner. When Mr. Lincoln was addressing the Court on a law question only or on facts, he made the instantaneous impression on the

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 428, 429.

Court that he was fair, honest, and would present the case fairly and honestly. The Court felt that there was no falsehood nor trick in his argument. The Court believed him to be a true gentleman, never suspecting that he would deceive or try to gain his point by any evasion or suppression of law or fact, but would meet each fairly and squarely. Mr. Lincoln did not glory in winning a case through a false argument, but rather had an ambition of gaining it on a substantial ground of justice. This seemed to be his pride. The jury, good common sense men of the country or the city, patiently listened to Mr. Lincoln's argument before them, and he was just as fair before them and to them as he was to the Court. Lincoln's statement of the case, both of law and of fact, was an argument, a plain, short, condensed argument. This impression was stamped on the jury, nor did Lincoln ever seek to take advantage of it; he met all questions fairly and squarely, admitting what he could not deny and making the case plain to be seen by the jury. All rubbish and trash was removed away and from around the issues that now arose clear to the minds. If the case was a long, dry, tedious one and the jury got tired and showed signs of weariness, or of sleepiness, Lincoln would tell one of his fine stories, and arouse them up to renewed attention, and then he would take up the thread of his argument and proceed on to the end of it.<sup>3</sup>

Lawyers have, generally speaking, the unenviable and no doubt in many cases the deserved reputation for prolonging litigation in order to justify large fees. Lincoln took the short-cuts to settle disputes, especially when he knew that the facts were against his client, as the following extract from a letter of J. Henry Shaw to Wm. Herndon under date of September 5, 1866 goes to show:

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 429, 430.

At the May term . . . he came in due time, called at my office, and said I had been suing some of his clients, and he had come down to attend to it. He then had reference to a new chancery case entitled "George Moore vs. Christina Moore and the heirs of Peter Moore" for a specific performance, the defendants all living near Springfield. I explained the case to him, and showed him my proofs. He seemed surprised that I should deal so frankly with him and said he should be as frank with me, that my client was justly entitled to a decree, and he should so represent it to the court, that it was against his principles to contest a clear matter of right. So my client got a deed for a farm, which, had another lawyer been in Mr. Lincoln's place, would have been litigated for years, with a big pile of costs, and the result probably the same. Mr. Lincoln's character for professional honor stood very high.<sup>4</sup>

How Lincoln demanded fair dealing of his clients is shown by the following letter from Herndon to Weik under date of November 19, 1885:

One word about Lincoln's honesty and fairness. Many, many years ago one Charles Matheny sold a piece of land to a Mrs. (I forget her name) who was Lincoln's client. The number of the acres in the piece was guessed at or a great mistake was made. The lines of the survey ran east, west, north, and south, but from well-known objects to well-known objects, called monuments. The price of the land was so much per acre and the deed showed the terms of the sale. About the year 1858 Mr. Lincoln was written to by the lady. to have her land surveyed, laid off into lots, etc. Lincoln got a compass, chains, etc., and surveyed the lands. In running off the land and calculating the number of acres he found that Matheny had lost four or five acres of land in this city and that his client had gained it—say four or five acres more or less. Old man Matheny in the meantime had died,

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 305.

leaving eight or nine children, some of whom had died, leaving heirs, children. Lincoln wrote to his client what he had done and what mistakes had been made and advised his client that she ought in morals and in law to rectify the mistake, pay the Matheny heirs what was justly due them according to the acres at the original price agreed upon. The woman at first declined to rectify, but Lincoln wrote her a long letter again, stating what he thought was right and just between the parties. Lincoln's last kind and noble letter brought the woman to her own sense of right, sent to Mr. Lincoln several hundred dollars. Lincoln was a friend to the Mathenys as well as to his client; he took the trouble of hunting up the scattered heirs and their descendants and paid them every cent that was due them and thus this man, noble man, was ever for justice and the eternal right.<sup>5</sup>

Even in his political speeches and debates where the general public took the place of the jury, he did not resort to half-truths, pathos and like tricks, or even to the oratory of which he was capable, though well he knew that by these "you can fool all of the people some of the time, and some of them all the time." If he used oratory, it was in the beginning of his speech to get attention to the later reasoning which was to satisfy their calmer judgement. "He could not cheat people out of their votes any more than he could out of their money." "The honestest man I ever knew" was the tribute of no less an opponent than Douglas himself.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 105, 106.

## CHAPTER XIII

### FAIRNESS IN LOVE

Those who have written about Lincoln's religion have, generally speaking, entirely avoided his love affairs. Perhaps they considered this "gossip," extraneous and beneath the subject. But is there anything in which the reality of religion is so put to the test or so manifest as in the direction and control of the emotion of love? "All is fair in love and war" is a popular proverb with the covenant breaker, but it was not a part of Lincoln's philosophy. "All those men have their price" said Walpole as he waved his hand toward the English Parliament, but the price of one who will not violate the Golden Rule when the bribe offered is all life's future happiness is far above rubies.

Ann Rutledge was the first, perhaps the only one, to have Lincoln's undivided affection. We need not linger to admire her blue eyes, blond hair (some say auburn), keenness, kindness and other charms; it is enough to know that at least three men succumbed to them, and one of them was the great Abraham Lincoln. But not the first one. John McNamar (alias John McNeil) was fortunate enough to discover this treasure when she was scarcely more than a school girl—seventeen. That this handsome, successful and admirable young man should be using an alias is explained this way. His parents had met with

misfortune and were poor. Hoping to relieve their condition, John had gone West (perhaps a.w.o.l.), changed his name, and having won his way to prosperity, was now about to return to surprise the old folks that this Joseph was yet alive, and to bring them back with him to his \$12,000 land holdings, purchased from New Salem's first citizen, James Rutledge, Ann's father. Before leaving on his long journey back to New York State by decrepit horse, he revealed his real name, family history, his hopes and other secrets to Ann, and bade farewell. He seems to have been almost as uncommunicative with Ann after leaving as he had been with his parents during his absence from them, and the harmless deception he had "pulled over" on the community in regard to his real name, they now returned on his own head, and instead of comforting Ann's pining heart with hope of his return, they shook their heads, sadly implying that he had deceived her also. At this point, Lincoln, now postmaster, (who should know better than he?) bolstered up McNeil's reputation by explaining why the assumed name was used. But as the years wore wearily on, Ann herself grew doubtful, yes, more than doubtful and that made it unanimous.

In the meanwhile Lincoln boarded at the Rutledge Tavern and the friendship that began while she was coming frequently to the post office to inquire for the infrequent and disappointing letters from McNamar, ripened into intimacy, and as McNamar faded out of the picture Lincoln brightened into a "close-up." He was in the Il-



linois legislature now at the age of twenty-six, evidence of the public esteem in which he was held. But he was still poor, and unable to marry even had Ann been willing, but she wanted to wait longer for McNamar, not to marry him but that she might have an honorable release directly from him. But in the summer of 1835 she sickened and died, the doctor pronouncing it "brain fever."

Lincoln, being naturally of a melancholy disposition, was beside himself with grief, wildly giving vent to such expressions as, "I can never be reconciled to have the snow, rains and storms to beat upon her grave." Whereupon the community pronounced him crazy and enticed him to the quiet home of his good friends, Mr. and Mrs. Bowlin Greene who nursed him through to normalcy "without accident" (meaning suicide).

It should be said for McNamar that he found his father in ill health, and after the father died, he did bring his mother to New Salem, and that all the reasons he gave Ann for his delayed return were true, but this hardly excused his neglect to write at all. And it ought to be said for Ann Rutledge and Abraham Lincoln that they paid all due respect that it deserved under the circumstances to Ann's sacred promise to McNamar.

Lincoln had been exposed to that ailment so apt to attack youth called love and had caught it virulently, so that he became somewhat immune to further attacks, but the memory of his experience was so vividly entrancing that he recklessly exposed himself again and again, but later

attacks were so mild as to be scarcely recognizable. Yet his melancholy loneliness rendered him susceptible to some of the symptoms. He is seeking not a companionate but a companionable marriage.

Lincoln first met Mary Owens in 1833 as a visitor at the home of her sister, Mrs. Abel, two years before the death of Ann. She was a year older than Lincoln, well endowed in worldly goods and averdupois, but withal easy to look upon. Now that Lincoln was lonely, he often visited his good friends the Abels, and Mrs. Abel banteringly remarked that she was going back to Kentucky for a visit and would bring her sister back with her if Lincoln—to quote his own letter—would “engage to become her (Mrs. Abel’s) brother-in-law with all convenient dispatch. I, of course, accepted the proposal, for you know I could not have done otherwise, had I really been adverse to it; but privately, between you and me, I was most confoundedly well pleased with the project. I had seen the said sister some three years before, thought her intelligent and agreeable, and saw no good objection to plodding life through hand in hand with her. Time passed on, the lady took her journey, and in due time returned, sister in company, sure enough. This astonished me a little; for it appeared to me that her coming so readily showed that she was a trifle too willing; but on reflection, it occurred to me that she might have been prevailed upon by her married sister to come, without anything concerning me ever having been mentioned to her;

and so I concluded, that, that if no other objection presented itself, I would consent to wave this." The letter to Mrs. O. H. Browning from which this is quoted goes on to tell of his disappointment in finding her much older looking and heavier than he had visualized her when he so lightly agreed to such a weighty contract. He then continues:

But what could I do? I had told her sister that I would take her for better or for worse; and I made a point of honor and conscience in all things to stick to my word, especially if others had been induced to act on it, which in this case I had no doubt they had; for I was now fairly convinced that no other man on earth would have her, and hence the conclusion that they were bent on holding me to my bargain. "Well," thought I, "I have said it, and, be the consequences what they may, it shall not be my fault if I fail to do it." At once I determined to consider her my wife; and, this done, all my powers of discovery were put to work in search of perfections in her which might be fairly set off against her defects. I tried to imagine her handsome, which, but for her unfortunate corpulency, was actually true. Exclusive of this, no woman that I have ever seen has a finer face. I also tried to convince myself that the mind was much more to be valued than the person; and in this she was not inferior, as I could discover, to any with whom I had been acquainted.

Lincoln spent much time in her company in apparent enjoyment, sincerely "trying to convince" himself, as he said, apparently forgetting that she also was not entirely convinced, not quite so courteous as he might have been, not so gallant in seeing that her horse got safely over the stream as the other young men of the company were attentive to their ladies. Perhaps he was too busy analyzing her to woo her, or as she put it, he was

“deficient in those little links which make up the great chain of woman’s happiness.” “He was lacking in the smaller attentions.” “His education was different.” His high principles and sensitive honor were not enough.

But “men must work and women must weep” and Lincoln must go to Vandalia and to Springfield to the meetings of the legislature, and letters, cold letters, must be the means of communication between them. One of these dated December 13, 1836 begins, “Mary,” then follows political news, and is signed, “Your friend, Lincoln.” It is certainly “lacking in the smaller attentions.” Later correspondence shows a little improvement; his letters are more personal, but if those quoted below are fair specimens, they must have kept the recipient guessing whether they were meant to be persuasive or dissuasive; they would make good models for a Declaration of Neutrality.

Springfield, May 7, 1837

Miss Mary Owens

Friend Mary—I have commenced two letters to send you before this, both of which displeased me before I got half done, and so I tore them up. The first I thought was not serious enough, and the second was on the other extreme. I shall send this, turn out as it may.

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’ve been here, and should not have been by her, if she could have avoided it. I’ve 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. Do you believe you could bear that patiently? Whatever woman may cast her lot with mine, should any ever do so, it is my intention to do all in my power to make her happy and contented; and there is nothing I can imagine that would make me more unhappy than to fail in the effort. I know I should be much happier with you than the way I am, provided I saw no signs of discontent in you. What you have said to me may have been in the way of jest, or I may have misunderstood it. If so, then let it be forgotten; if otherwise, I much wish you would think seriously before you decide. For my part, I have already decided. What I have said I will most positively abide by, provided you wish it. My opinion is that you had better not do it. You have not been accustomed to hardship, and it may be more severe than you now imagine. I know you are capable of thinking correctly on any subject; and, if you deliberate maturely upon this before you decide then I am willing to abide your decision.

You must write me a good long letter after you get this. You have nothing else to do; and, though it might not seem interesting to you after you have written it, it would be a good deal of company to me in this "busy wilderness." Tell your sister I don't want to hear any more about her selling out and moving. That gives me the hypo whenever I think of it.

Yours

LINCOLN

Springfield, August 16, 1837

Friend Mary—You will no doubt think it rather strange that I should write you a letter on the same day on which we parted; and I can only account for it by supposing that seeing you lately makes me think of you more than

usual; while at our late meeting we had but few expressions of thoughts. You must know that I cannot see you, or think of you, with entire indifference; and yet it may be that you are mistaken in regard to what my real feelings toward you are. If I knew you were not, I should not trouble you with this letter. Perhaps any other man would know enough without further information; but I consider it my peculiar right to plead ignorance, and your bounden duty to allow the plea. I want in all cases to do right; and most particularly so in all cases with women. I want, at this particular time, more than anything else, to do right with you: and if I knew it would be doing right, as I rather suspect it would, to let you alone, I would do it. And, for the purpose of making the matter as plain as possible, I now say that you can drop the subject, dismiss your thoughts (if you ever had any) from me forever, and leave this letter unanswered, without calling forth one accusing murmur from me. And I will even go further, and say, that, if it will add anything to your comfort or peace of mind to do so, it is my sincere wish that you should. Do not understand by this that I wish to cut your acquaintance. I mean no such thing. What I do wish is that our further acquaintance shall depend upon yourself. If such further acquaintance would constitute nothing to your happiness, I am sure it would not to mine. If you feel yourself in any degree bound to me, I am willing to release you, provided you wish it; while, on the other hand, I am willing and even anxious to bind you faster, if I can be convinced that it will, in any considerable degree, add to your happiness. This, indeed, is the whole question with me. Nothing would make me more miserable than to believe you miserable—nothing more happy than to know you were so.

In what I have now said, I think I cannot be misunderstood; and to make myself understood is the only object of this letter.

If it suits you best to not answer this, farewell. A long life and a merry one attend you. But, if you conclude to

write back, speak as plainly as I do. There can be neither harm nor danger in saying to me any thing you think, just in the manner you think it.

My respects to your sister.

Your friend

LINCOLN

For the sequel to this story, read the rest of Lincoln's letter to Mrs. Browning:

Shortly after this, without attempting to come to any positive understanding with her, I sat out for Vandalia, when and where you first saw me. During my stay there I had letters from her which did not change my opinion of either intellect of intention, but, on the contrary, confirmed it in both.

All this while, although I was fixed, "firm as the surge-repelling rock" in my resolution, I found I was continually repenting the rashness which had led me to make it. Through life I have been in no bondage, either real or imaginary, from the thralldom of which I so much desired to be free. After my return home, I saw nothing to change my opinions of her in any particular. She was the same, and so was I. I now spent my time in planning how I might get along through life after my contemplated change of circumstances should have taken place, and how I might procrastinate the evil day for a time, which I really dreaded as much, perhaps more, than an Irishman does the halter.

After all my suffering upon this deeply-interesting subject, here I am, wholly, unexpectedly, completely, out of the "scrape;" and I now want to know if you can guess how I got out of it—out, clear, in every sense of the term; no violation of word, honor, or conscience. I don't believe you can guess, and so I might as well tell you at once. As the lawyer says, it was done in the manner following, to wit: After I had delayed the matter as long as I thought I could in honor do (which, by the way, had brought me round into the last fall), I concluded I might as well bring it to a consummation without further

delay; and so I mustered my resolution and made the proposal to her direct; but, shocking to relate, she answered, No. At first I supposed she did it through an affectation of modesty, which I thought but ill became her under the peculiar circumstances of her case; but, on my renewal of the charge, I found she repelled it with greater firmness than before. I tried it again and again, but with the same success, or rather with the same want of success.

I finally was forced to give it up; at which I very unexpectedly found myself mortified almost beyond endurance. I was mortified, it seemed to me in a hundred different ways. My vanity was deeply wounded by the reflection that I had so long been too stupid to discover her intentions, and at the same time never doubting that I understood them perfectly; and also that she, whom I had taught myself to believe nobody else would have, had actually rejected me with all my fancied greatness. And, to cap the whole, I then, for the first time, began to suspect that I was really a little in love with her. But let it all go. I'll try and outlive it. Others have been made fools of by the girls; but this can never with truth be said of me. I most emphatically, in this instance, made a fool of myself. I have now come to the conclusion never again to think of marrying, and for this reason: I can never be satisfied with any one who would be block-head enough to have me. When you receive this, write me a long yarn about something to amuse me. Give my respects to Mr. Browning.

Your sincere friend,

A. LINCOLN

This letter has been severely criticized for its lack of gallantry, or rather its brutality in discussing his lady friend, but it should be borne in mind, it was not written for the public, but is a "paying guest's" apology to his landlady for his morose behaviour while at her house. The only



purpose in quoting it here is to show how Lincoln would live up to his contracts, even if they were only verbal and made through a middleman, cost what it might.

And so, Mr. Lincoln, you "have now come to the conclusion never again to think of marrying, and for this reason: I can never be satisfied with any one who would be blockhead enough to have me." Your "conclusion" is overruled by one, to wit, Mary Todd, but you will get used to having your decisions overruled. But she is no "blockhead," and you will have to be "satisfied."

This daughter of a Scotch-Irish Kentucky banker who had reared his family amid the luxuries of fine horses, abundance of cattle, some slaves and with schooling in French, her home now being presided over by a step-mother, finds life in the home of her brother-in-law, Ninian Edwards, in Springfield more inviting to her adventurous spirit than the older settlement in Lexington. She was as shrewd in her matrimonial choices as her father had been in money matters, for confronted with the option between Douglas and Lincoln, she gambled her life on the less prepossessing of the two, though she and Douglas were better matched physically, intellectually, educationally, spiritually, socially, and temperamentally; and both were aristocrats while Lincoln was a commoner. But as she said at a later date: "Mr. Lincoln is to be President of the United States some day; if I had not thought so, I would not have married him, for you can see he is not pretty." But without her irresistible ambition

pushing him, would he have made the grade?

But while that same force was leading him toward the marriage altar he seemed to sense that it would be the altar of sacrifice of his freedom, perhaps of his personality, and he is seized by another of those emotional chills. He writes Mary a letter and asks his friend Speed to deliver it to break the sad news. Speed refuses: "Words may be forgotten, but letters remain," and Speed burned the letter. "If you have the courage of manhood, go see Mary yourself; tell her you do not love her; tell her so; tell her you will not marry her." Lincoln went but returned at eleven that night to report to Speed: "When I told Mary I did not love her, she burst into tears, and, almost springing from her chair and wringing her hands as if in agony, said something about the deceiver being himself deceived" (*alluding to her treatment of another man*). "It was too much for me. I found tears trickling down my own cheeks. I caught her in my arms and kissed her." Speed told him he had made a fool of himself. "Well, if I'm in again, so be it. It's done and I shall abide by it."

The affair goes on, and rumor has it that January 1, 1841 was the day set, the guests were invited, the viands prepared, and then it happened again. After two weeks of desultory attendance on the legislature Lincoln is in bed for a week; he looks so badly that Springfield thinks he had been jilted. Speed sells his business and takes Lincoln to visit his folks in Kentucky. Herndon calls this Lincoln's second period of insanity. His letters to

his law partner Stuart show his inability to concentrate: "I have within the last few days been making a most discreditable exhibition of myself in the way of hypochondriasm." "I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on earth. Whether I shall ever be better, I cannot tell. I awfully forbode I shall not. To remain as I am is impossible. I must die or be better, as it appears to me. . . . I can write no more."

But a year and a half later, Lincoln seems to have assisted Mary Todd in writing satires for the *Sangamo Journal*, and when James Shields, a Democrat, becomes incensed, Lincoln assuming the responsibility for her lampoons is challenged to a duel which he manages to turn into a fiasco. This affair of which he was heartily ashamed separated him from Shields but bound up the broken bonds with Mary, and in November they were married almost as suddenly and unexpectedly as the previous arrangements had been disrupted.

And did they live happily ever afterwards? Herndon, who on his first meeting with Mary Todd blundered awkwardly in an attempted compliment, saying, "You dance like a serpent," received a serpent's hiss in acknowledgement, and being unable to wriggle out of the situation gracefully, there was enmity between him and the woman ever afterward. In his opinion, Lincoln lived the life of a yellow dog; we hope he was mistaken.

At any rate, they prospered. Beginning in two rooms of an inn with board and room for four dollars a week for two, they soon purchased a home, were blessed with four sons, and Mr. Lincoln rose in his profession to be chosen President. Their life together was not all roses; there were thorns. Mrs. Lincoln was quick tempered and irritable. Mr. Lincoln was given to periods of melancholy. She loved formality; he despised it. But they both loved their children and they were loyal to one another.

In Washington she had a difficult place. She had three brothers to give their lives in the Confederate cause. The South considered her a traitor; the North accused her of being a spy. She was extravagant, wasteful, selfish, hungry for gay society, and disappointed in the honors paid to her. She meddled in political appointments to her own and the nation's hurt, to the destroying of her husband's influence and eventually of his life. She was jealous of her husband, so that no other lady could lead the formal processions on the President's arm with her following on some other man's arm as the custom was. She made "scenes" a-plenty. But jealousy springs from love, and they loved unto the death. On the day of his assassination, a great load had been lifted from his mind, he was gay, youthful again. As they sat in the box in Ford's Theatre, they talked of the future, of a hoped-for visit to the Holy Land together. She was leaning on him. "What will Miss Harris think of my hanging on to you so?" she coyed, and he replied, "She won't

think anything about it." According to Mrs. Lincoln, those were his last words.

The last seventeen years of Mrs. Lincoln's life after the President's death are sadly stranger than fiction. Few of the things that she did could be counted sane. She persuaded herself and tried to persuade the public that she was poverty stricken, and pled for a pension, although the estate was appraised at \$110,000. She sold her clothes at auction, and complained bitterly of the nation's ingratitude. When she went on a buying spree in 1875, in two days buying \$772.00 worth of sashes, ribbons and laces, three watches for \$450, other jewelry \$700, perfumes \$200, and \$550 worth of lace curtains though she had no home in which to hang them, her son Robert had to have her committed to a doctor's care as insane. But a year later she was given the custody of her goods and spent some years in Europe. After a fall from a step-ladder she returned to America and lived a while in a darkened, candle-lighted room in the house of her sister in Springfield where she had been married. All her sons were dead but Robert. She wrote in a letter: "Ah, my dear friend, you will rejoice when you know I have gone to my husband and children." All friends of Lincoln might well rejoice when death ended her pitiful story on July 16, 1882. A newspaper account speaks of her wedding ring: "It is of Etruscan gold and is now quite thin from wear. It is inscribed with 'A. L. to Mary, Nov. 4, 1842. Love is Eternal.' The ring will be put on and probably buried with her."

Her memory was clear, her conversation sparkling, her face animated and pleasing up to the last "and to me she was always an interesting woman," says her kind doctor, Thomas W. Dresser, "and while the world was finding fault with her temper and disposition, it was clear to me that the trouble was really a cerebral disease." His post-mortem examination confirmed his opinion that her sudden tempests and vagaries were written in the tissues of her brain early in life, perhaps pre-natal. Perhaps that was Lincoln's diagnosis also, for at the time of Willie's death she was so extravagant in her grief that in his fatherly way, he pointed to a lunatic asylum and said: "Mother, do you see that large white building yonder? Unless you control your grief, I am afraid we shall have to send you there." Her tantrums, her illusions, her extravagances, her "scenes" increased in frequency and violence and in publicity, but to her husband she was a part of his sad, God-assigned role, and he would play it manfully. "What God hath joined together let not man put asunder." What a rebuke to all those who fly to Reno because the wife has burned the beans or the husband's muddy boots have tracked up the clean carpet!

## CHAPTER XIV

### LINCOLN'S TENDER-HEARTEDNESS

The sensitiveness of the nervous system and its quickness to respond to stimuli measures the distinction between higher and lower animals. The one that feels most, ranks highest in the scale of being. Suffering is the price paid for the complex nervous system, and man pays the highest price of all. We may carry the thought further, that the man whose nervous system does not terminate with his epidermis, but reaches out "to feel another's woe" is of a higher rank of being than he who lives unto himself. "Be ye kind, tender-hearted" was Paul's wish and command for his converts whom he assumed were pressing toward the receding goal of the upward calling. And what is kindness but the radiation of a tender heart, and what is tender-heartedness but a sort of wireless nervous system tuned to respond to suffering wherever found. "I would not count among my friends," said the sage, "the man who needlessly sets his foot upon a worm." And of another whose compassions failed not, it was said, "A bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking flax He will not quench." A kindness done but once in a lifetime may have been an accident; done twice, it may have been a mere coincidence; done frequently, it may be a habit; but when it occurs constantly and under varied conditions, it is an essential ingredient of the personality, the

manifestation of character.

Let us read again that oft told dog story. When Thomas Lincoln and his family were trekking from Indiana to Illinois in March, 1830, they came to one of those long loggy corduroy bridges through a wide swamp. The water was over the logs with a thin sheet of ice over the water. It took much moral suasion and a final reluctant resort to the more severe persuader to get Abe's ox team to break the ice and go on to the bridge. But let Mr. Herndon finish the story:

When about half-way over, Abe heard his poor dog bring a kind of despairing howl; he stopped the oxen, pulled off his shoes, rolled up his pants, got out of the wagon, jumped into the cold water, the sheets of ice biting his shins. He got the dog, took him, frightened nearly to death, in his long and strong arms, carried him to the wagon, put him in it, the dog crouching close to Mrs. Lincoln's feet, scared half out of his wits. The oxen were soon told to go on, and on they went through the ice. After the family had crossed and got on dry land, Abe found difficulty in getting the dog out of the wagon; at last he had to haul him out by force. When the dog was out and on dry land, he cut up such antics as no dog ever did before; he ran round and round Abe and laid down at his feet, got up and ran round and round again and again; he seemed, was, grateful to Abe, his benefactor. Lincoln said to Dubois after telling him the story: "Well, Jesse, I guess that I felt about as glad as the dog."

Another writer tells us there were two children in the company to whom the "spotted dog" was very dear, and it was for their sakes, as much as for the dog's that he went back.

And we must not forget about that young pig that mired down in the slough (of Despond, no

<sup>1</sup>Emanuel Hertz, *The Hidden Lincoln*, p. 227.



doubt). Lincoln rode past, arrayed in a new suit, "rather fixed up," as he said. He shut his ears and looked the other way, and thought of the new suit. But alas! like Lot's wife, he could not resist the temptation to look back, "and the poor thing seemed to say so wistfully, '*There now! my last hope is gone,*'" that he turned back. When he had washed his hands in the brook,—but not his suit,—he was congratulating himself on his pure benevolence, but finally concluded that it was pure selfishness. He had gone to the pig's relief, as he said, "to take a pain out of my own mind."

Let John D. Wickizer, an intimate friend of Lincoln, tell us his pig story (from a letter to Herndon, dated November 25, 1866):

In 1855 Mr. Lincoln and myself were traveling by buggy from Woodford County Court to Bloomington, Ill., and in passing through a little grove, we suddenly heard the terrific squealing of a little pig near by us. Quick as thought Mr. Lincoln leaped out of the buggy, seized a club, and pounced upon an old sow, and beat her lustily, that was in the act of eating one of her young ones, and thus he saved the pig and then remarked: "By jingo! the unnatural old brute shall not devour her own progeny." This, I think was his first proclamation of freedom.<sup>2</sup>

Another fellow-traveler relates this story, not about hogs this time, but birds:

We passed through a thicket of wild-plum and crab-apple trees, and stopped to water our horses. One of the party came up alone, and we inquired: "Where is Lincoln?"

"O," he replied, "when I saw him last he had caught two young birds which the wind had blown out of their nest, and he was hunting for the nest, that he might put

<sup>2</sup>Emanuel Hertz, *The Hidden Lincoln*, p. 320.

them back in it."

In a short time Lincoln came up, having found the nest and restored the birds. The party laughed at his care of the young birds; but Lincoln said: "I could not have slept tonight if I had not restored those little birds to their mother."<sup>3</sup>

We would naturally expect this humble imitator of Him who notes the fall of the sparrow to be interested in children. Listen to the Sabbath School superintendent of the Five Points House of Industry tell of what happened in their school in New York City in 1860.

One Sunday morning I saw a tall, remarkable-looking man enter the room, and take a seat among us. He listened with fixed attention to our exercises, and his countenance expressed such genuine interest that I approached him, and suggested that he might be willing to say something to the children. He accepted the invitation with evident pleasure; and, coming forward, began a simple address, which at once fascinated every little hearer, and hushed the room into silence. His language was strikingly beautiful, and his tones musical with intense feeling. The little faces would droop into sad conviction as he uttered sentences of warning, and would brighten into sunshine as he spoke cheerful words of promise. Once or twice he attempted to close his remarks, but the imperative shout of "Go on! O, do go on!" would compel him to resume.

As I looked upon the gaunt and sinewy frame of the stranger, and marked his powerful head and determined features, now touched into softness by the impressions of the moment, I felt an irrepressible curiosity to learn something more about him, and, while he was quietly leaving the room I begged to know his name. He courteously replied: "It is Abraham Lincoln, from Illinois."<sup>4</sup>

Most of you have read the story of the Presi-

<sup>3</sup>Thompson, Abraham Lincoln, p. 141.

<sup>4</sup>Thompson, Abraham Lincoln, pp. 144, 145.

dent's carrying a small girl's baggage to the railroad depot because it was heavy for her, and it is quite in line with the incidents related above and the following one from a letter of R. B. Rutledge (brother of Ann) to Herndon, dated October, 1866:

In illustration of his goodness and nobleness of heart, the following incident is related. Ab Trout, a poor bare-footed boy, was engaged one cold winter day in chopping a pile of logs from an old house or stable which had been pulled down. The wood was dry and hard and the boy was hard at work, when Lincoln came up and asked what he got for the job, and what he would do with the money. "Ab" said \$1.00 and, pointing to his naked feet, said: "A pair of shoes." Abe told him to go in and warm and he would chop a while for him. The boy delayed a little, but Lincoln finished the work, threw down his ax, and told him to go and buy the shoes. "Ab" remembered this act with the liveliest gratitude. Once he, being a cast-iron Democrat, determined to vote against his party and for Mr. Lincoln; but the friends, as he afterwards said with tears in his eyes, made him drunk and he had voted against Abe. Thus he did not even have an opportunity to return the noble conduct of Mr. Lincoln by this small measure of thanks.<sup>5</sup>

Replying to the question why he seemed to take so little pleasure in women's society, he told this parable that unintentionally revealed his youthful kindness:

When we lived in Indiana, once in a while my mother used to . . . make some gingerbread. . . . One day I smelled the gingerbread, and came into the house to get my share while it was still hot. My mother had baked me three gingerbread men. I took them out under a hickory tree to eat them. There was a family near us poorer than we were, and their boy came along as we

<sup>5</sup>Emanuel Hertz, *The Hidden Lincoln*, pp. 314, 315.

sat down. . . . "Abe," he said, "gimme a man!" And I gave him one. He crammed it into his mouth in two bites, and looked at me while I was biting the legs off my first one. "Abe," he said, "gimme that other'n." I wanted it myself, but I gave it to him, and it followed the first. I said to him, "You seem to like gingerbread." "Abe," he said, "I don't s'pose anybody on earth likes gingerbread better'n I do—and gets less'n I do."

But birds and animals and childhood and youth were not the only ones to benefit from Lincoln's tender heart for group-ups as well as swine sometimes wallow in the mire, and others beside young robins are unable to return to the home nest. As Lincoln and his companions were returning from a winter evening's frolic, they came upon the saddled horse of a well-known drunkard and suspected what had happened. The others were unanimous for letting things take their natural course; it was too uncomfortably cold to hunt for the rider. But Lincoln persisted, and when they had found him, they laid the black sheep on Lincoln's shoulders who carried him a quarter of a mile to his cabin, sent word to his own father that he would not be home, and built a fire and worked with him until morning. The man acknowledged that but for Lincoln he would have frozen to death. All such incidents help us to understand why Lincoln could not refuse an official pardon of which he may have granted too many.

## CHAPTER XV

### KINSHIP TO THE SLAVE

The words *kin* and *kindness* are from the same root. We are kind to those of our own kin or kind. Being kind is our acknowledgment of kinship. We are kind to animals, but it is the kinship of sympathy or suffering, fellow-feeling for their wants. Strangely enough, some folks show more kindly feeling toward animals than for their own human kind, especially if those humans are of certain races, negroes or Jews, for example. Lincoln's inter-racial nerve had never been unnaturally severed. The human race was all one to him.

After Lincoln had been nominated for the Presidency he was interviewed as to his early life. His reply was, "Why, it is great 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 Gray'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." But it was not quite so simple as that.

It may have been partly the hunger for adventure, but there was the common variety of hunger concerned in it too, that led him and some of the neighbors to make two trips to New Orleans with flat-boat loads of hogs and other farm

products. The adventure on the first trip was furnished by a band of negro marauders attempting to rob the cargo, who were driven off after a sharp fight. How many men would have resented such an attack for the rest of their lives, holding it not against the individuals who committed the crime, but against the whole race that gave them birth!

Other impressions that he carried through life, mental souvenirs of that trip were placards reading: "I will at all times pay the highest cash prices for negroes of every description, and will also attend the sale of negroes on commission, having a jail and a yard fitted up expressly for boarding them." At the next corner: "One hundred dollars reward for the return of a bright mulatto man slave, named Sam; light sandy hair, blue eyes, ruddy complexion—is so white as very easily to pass for a white man." So this thing that he had heard his father and mother talk about in his childhood becomes a reality. And they had learned to hate it from the minister who married them, the Rev. Jesse Head who since the crusade in Kentucky in 1804 had been an abolitionist boldly proclaiming the right of liberty wherever he went.

Lincoln's second flatboat trip to New Orleans gave him a month's stay in that city of Babylon. A month to observe, to converse with its citizens, to meditate, and to reason toward some very deep and lasting conclusions. With John Hanks he wandered into a slave market where they saw slaves chained, scourged, and maltreated. They saw a mulatto slave girl, beautiful, youthful and

unsullied, almost nude, being pinched and prodded and trotted about like a horse to show how she moved that "bidders might satisfy themselves of her soundness" as the auctioneer said. That she was a mulatto had sad implications as to her past. The lack of character in the faces of the excited bidders boded ill for her future. Hanks told long afterwards: "Lincoln saw it; his heart bled; said nothing much, was silent. I can say, knowing it, that it was on this trip that he formed his opinion of slavery. It ran its iron into him then and there, May, 1831. I have heard him say so often." Hanks also told how Lincoln said: "Boys, let's get away from this. If ever I get a chance to hit that thing, I'll hit it and hit it hard." Put that remark with another one for which Lincoln has become famous, "I will get ready and some day my chance will come," and it spelled doom for the slave trade.

Lincoln hated slavery for its cruelties and injustice, but he hated it also for its immoralities. Frederick Douglas, negro lecturer and journalist, whose mother was a slave and his father a white man and himself an escaped slave, was once flaunted by a Southerner with the remark, "Sir, I would have you understand that my father was a Southern gentleman," to which he replied, "And I have reason to suspect that my father was too." Lincoln's own mother's father was that kind of Southern gentleman. Is it strange if he felt a kinship to that mulatto slave girl? And New Orleans was full of mulattos. "When, profoundly moved, the young man from the North returns to the harbor, he may, glancing through the window

of a saloon, see two flushed faces over a game of faro; and the doorkeeper, in an undertone, will perhaps tell him how the day before one of the wealthier slave owners had gambled away two of his own half cast sons."<sup>1</sup>

Everywhere, the servile work was being done by the negroes, while the whites were growing flabby in the lap of luxury. But whether he talked with the parson, the school teacher, the magistrate or the slave owner, the answers were the same. The race of Ham was doomed to be a servant of servants; Esau had sold the Birthright; the negro was better off than when in Africa; they are cared for and protected and do not want freedom. The conscience of the South was seared. Lincoln remarked to Hanks, "I would not be a slave, but neither would I be a slave owner."

God didn't forget Lincoln's vow. Lincoln may have forgotten it, but he never ceased to cringe when he saw the wrongs suffered by the negroes, as the following extract from a letter to his very intimate friend Speed of Kentucky, dated May 24, 1855, shows:

"You know what a poor correspondent I am. Ever since I received your very agreeable letter of the 22nd I have been intending to write you an answer to it. You suggest that in political action, now, you and I would differ. I suppose we would; not quite so much, however, as you may think. You know I dislike slavery, and you fully admit the abstract wrong of it. So far there is no cause of difference. But you say that sooner than yield your legal right to the slave, especially at the bidding of those who are not themselves interested, you would see the Union dissolved. I am not aware that any one is

<sup>1</sup>Emil Ludwig, Lincoln, p. 31.



bidding you yield that right; very certainly I am not. I leave that matter entirely to yourself. I also acknowledge your rights and my obligations under the Constitution in regard to your slaves. I confess I hate to see the poor creatures hunted down and caught and carried back to their stripes and unrequited toil; but I bite my lips and keep quiet. In 1841 you and I had together a tedious low-water trip on a steamboat from Louisville to St. Louis. You may remember as I well do, that from Louisville to the mouth of the Ohio there were on board ten or a dozen slaves shackled together with irons. That sight was a continual torment to me, and I see something like it every time I touch the Ohio or any other slave border. It is not fair for you to assume that I have no interest in a thing which has, and continually exercises, the power to make me miserable. You ought rather to appreciate how much the great body of the Northern people do crucify their feelings, in order to maintain their loyalty to the Constitution and the Union. I do oppose the extension of slavery because my judgment and feelings so prompt me, and I am under no obligations to the contrary. If for this you and I must differ, differ we must.”<sup>2</sup>

While he was a member of the Illinois legislature, there was little opportunity to “hit” slavery in this free state. But during his one term as a United States Congressman he did offer a bill to free the slaves in the District of Columbia, and voted, as he said, for the Wilmot Proviso in one form or another more than fifty times. Not being returned to Congress, he retired from active participation in politics until the slavery measures of the early fifties aroused his righteous indignation. From 1854 until his election as President he concentrated a great deal of his effort in opposing Douglas, the proponent

<sup>2</sup>Ward H. Lamon, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, pp. 368, 369.

of "Squatter Sovereignty." During those debates Douglas said: "When the struggle is between the negro and the white man, I am for the white man; when it is between the negro and the crocodile, I am for the negro." To which Lincoln replied: "We gather from this, as a white man is to a negro, so is a negro to a crocodile; and as the negro may rightfully treat the crocodile, so may the white man rightfully treat the negro." On another occasion, "I loathe this indifference. It weakens the sense of justice in our state." When Douglas kept twitting Lincoln about wanting to "marry a nigger," Lincoln almost lost patience and replied:

I have no purpose to produce political and social equality. I am not in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes or of qualifying them to hold office or of allowing them to intermarry with white people. . . . Judge Douglas infers that because I do not want a negro woman for a slave, that I must want her for a wife. I do not understand it that way. My understanding is that I can just let her alone. . . . I have never had the least apprehension that I or my friends would marry negroes, even if there was no law to keep them from it; but as Judge Douglas and his friends seem to be in great apprehension that they might, if there were no law to keep them from it, I give him the most solemn pledge that I will, to the very last, stand by the law of this state which forbids the marrying of white people with negroes. . . . I agree with Judge Douglas that the negro is not my equal in many respects, but in the right to eat the bread which his own hand has produced, without the leave of anybody else, he is my equal, and the equal of Judge Douglas, and the equal of any living man.

Perhaps it was natural that as Lincoln grew older, and the whole nation was made to suffer

for the injustice done to the negro, that there should be almost a tinge of bitterness toward those who had upheld slavery as a divine right of the white man to rule the black. This comes out in his letter replying to a committee of Baptists, dated May 30, 1864.

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 in 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 condemned 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."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln: Speeches, Letters, and State Papers, Nicolay and Hay.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A GREAT SOUL

Giant trees are measured by the length of their shadows; great souls by the length of their beams of light. "With charity for all; with malice toward none" was not just a happy phrase that came to Lincoln for a great occasion; it was a standard he had set for himself which he had proved out in the laboratory of his daily living. Consider his attitude toward these men: Lee, McClellan, Fremont, Cameron, Seward, Chase, Stanton, and Greeley. To each of these he for-gave much, but dealt generously with them.

Cameron was made Secretary of War because Lincoln's friends, contrary to his express instructions, had promised him a Cabinet position to swing the Pennsylvania votes for Lincoln's nomination in 1860. It did not take long to demonstrate that this political dealer was dealing out war contracts for his own benefit, even as he had previously enriched himself in trading his political influence for the re-nomination of Andrew Jackson. The socks for the soldiers pulled apart, the blankets were too thin, the glued knapsacks that should have been stitched, all betokened the corruption of this Pennsylvania politician and the rottenness of the contracts he had made. Yet Lincoln shared the blame, saying that himself and his Cabinet were jointly responsible for anything that was amiss. Cameron also tried to steal a

march on the President by issuing a premature Emancipation Proclamation. Having proved his unfitness for the Cabinet to the satisfaction of all, he was promoted (?) to Minister to Russia for a short term. He gratefully remained Lincoln's friend to the end.

W. H. Seward was made Secretary of State, although he had been Lincoln's strongest rival for the Presidential nomination in 1860, having 173½ votes to Lincoln's 102 on the first ballot. He had had far more political experience than Lincoln, having served as Governor of New York and also as United States Senator in which positions he had shown great ability. But he had been quite pronounced in his anti-slavery views and had startled the Southern leaders by declaring "There is a higher law than the Constitution" and on another occasion spoke of the "irrepressible conflict" that was ahead. He was too much of an abolitionist to win the election: hence Lincoln. He accepted a Cabinet position reluctantly, and after a few weeks of Lincoln's wavering administration, handed the President a memorandum, "Thoughts for Your Consideration" of things which must be done, and done quickly. His most startling proposal was that certain sharp demands be made on France and Spain to provoke, if possible, a foreign war and thereby re-unite the North and South. "Either the President must do it himself . . . or devolve it on some member of his cabinet. . . . It is not my especial province. But I neither seek to evade or assume responsibility." All through between the lines one might read, "Who is

so discreet and wise as Seward?" but though this amounted to a charge of utter incompetency and virtually suggested that the President abdicate in Seward's favor, Lincoln kept him in the office, sometimes with much persuasion, until his assassination, at which time an almost successful attempt was also made on Seward's life. But he recovered and lived to complete his second term under President Johnston.

Salmon P. Chase, another rival for the Presidential nomination of 1860, was made Secretary of the Treasury. He likewise had held the governorship of Ohio, was a successful lawyer, a leader in the United States Senate, and a more pronounced anti-slavery man even than Seward. He seems to have accepted the Cabinet position with a hope in his heart that there would be another Presidential election, and while he administered his office well, he was not a Lincoln booster, especially as the time for that election drew nearer. His resignation was also put into the hands of the President at most inconvenient times. Toward the end of his term he was appointed a Judge of the Supreme Court which, while not entirely satisfying his ambition, at least mollified his disappointment that Lincoln was to be chosen his own successor.

Robert E. Lee was recommended by General Winfield Scott as the General to be put in charge of the Union Army, but when Lincoln tendered him the place, he resigned and retired from the army, not wishing to shed the blood of his countrymen. Later when his own state, Virginia,

seceded, he threw in his lot with the South. His loss to the Union cause was estimated as the equivalent of 20,000 men, but that was too conservative. He and Stonewall Jackson together were the chariots of the South and the horsemen thereof, while the weakness of the North for the first three or more years of the war was its absence of leadership. Had Lee led our armies, certainly, humanly speaking, the war would not have lasted long. But Lincoln was not bitter, though he might have laid all those years of bloodshed and suffering at this one man's door, had he been less reasonable, less magnanimous. The terms given to Lee upon his final surrender were most generous, though in the nomenclature of the North and in the thinking and feeling of the North at that time, the South were all rebels, and Lee was their leader. On the morning before Lincoln's assassination, his son Robert laid the morning paper at his father's plate, bearing a picture of General Robert E. Lee. Lincoln studied it long and thoughtfully and said: "It is a good face. It is the face of a noble brave man. I am glad that the war is over at last."

On Lee's declination of the command of the army, the place was given to McClellan, a man with an excellent record at West Point, in the Mexican War, and as an engineer, and who had been a high official in the Illinois Central Railroad and later in the St. Louis and Cincinnati Railroad. It was he that during the Lincoln-Douglas debates furnished Douglas with special trains from city to city, but side-tracked Lincoln's coach

accommodations to let the Douglas special pass, and the trainmen seem to have been instructed to make his journeys as unpleasant as possible. And he continued to treat Lincoln in that same manner even when Lincoln became his Commander-in-chief. When Lincoln calls on him, he keeps him waiting in the ante-room, but when the public resents this slap in the face, Lincoln says: "I will hold McClellan's stirrup for him, if he will only win us victories," but these victories McClellan seemed careful to avoid, as though he were afraid that if he damaged the armies of the South, he would be damaging his chance to be the Democratic Presidential candidate in 1864. There is evidence that such a contract actually existed. On another day when McClellan returned to his quarters he finds Lincoln and Seward waiting for him, but goes on to his room and sends them a message that he is sorry that he is too tired to see them today. Lincoln bore long and patiently with these insults, his delays and pleas for more troops, but finally displaced him, although he afterwards gave him a second chance as commander of the Army of the Potomac, but with no better results.

Fremont, Republican candidate for the Presidency in 1856, and still considered as the possible candidate in 1864, was another rival of the President to be given a chance to make good as the one in charge of the Army of the West. He too transgressed in anticipating the Emancipation Proclamation by declaring the slaves free in Missouri, and refusing to rescind his order and sent his wife to abuse and threaten the President.



President Lincoln was big enough to choose big men for high office, men whom the public had already voted as choice men. If they overshadowed him in the eyes of that public, he would rejoice in their efficiency. But these men reciprocated the compliment by considering themselves as indispensable to the President whom they treated as an inferior, dependent on them to save the nation.

But the supreme exhibition of Lincoln's grace was his appointment of Stanton as Secretary of War. Stanton was a Democrat and had been Attorney General under President Buchanan, but was strong for maintaining the Union, and had gone boldly to his chief and rebuked him for encouraging secession, calling it "treason." Lincoln had met him at the time of his inauguration, but he had also met him very unpleasantly in 1859 in Cincinnati when they were attorneys together in a patent trial of the McCormick Reaper Company. Lincoln was the best informed of the several attorneys on the case, and was the rightful one to have made the plea, but Stanton treated him with contempt, put himself forward as chief counsel, and told his friends loudly enough to be overheard by Lincoln that nothing would induce him to associate with "such a ———, gawky, long-armed ape as that." At the hotel where both stayed his conduct was so discourteous that on returning to Springfield, Lincoln reported that he had "never been so brutally treated as by that man Stanton." Stanton had prepared the way for Lincoln's reception in Washington by speak-

ing of him as the "original gorilla," and had once asked McClellan why anyone should go all the way to Africa in search of what could be so easily found in Springfield, Illinois. And this was his attitude when he joined the Cabinet. When it was reported to the President that Stanton had called him the superlative degree variety of fool, Lincoln inquired, "Did Stanton say that?" "Yes, he did." "Then I guess I must be one, for Stanton is usually right." When other complaints were made against Stanton, Lincoln replied with the Bible admonition, "Accuse not a man to his master."

As finally constituted, Lincoln's Cabinet was made up of four men of the opposition party, and the three from his own party who were political rivals, yes, almost personal adversaries. When asked why he chose four Democrats and only three Republicans, he answered, "I am a Republican myself and that makes it equal." He would not allow a party name nor a personal antagonism to deprive his country of an experienced expert's services, though he must often have suffered from their superiority complexes.

Yet Lincoln lived to win the love and respect of these rivals. Seward had despised his weak policies, but when Lincoln won a diplomatic victory in dealing with a critical situation with England, Seward wrote to his wife, "Executive force and vigor are rare qualities. The President is the best of us." And Stanton is reported to have said at Lincoln's bier, "There lies the greatest ruler of men that ever lived."

But the constantly pricking thorn in the President's flesh, nay, rather the sword in his side, was Horace Greeley, for he had a weapon like a weaver's beam in the *New York Weekly Tribune*, tipped with the keen point of his pen dipped in vitriolic ink, and he used it brutally. This paper circulated widely over the nation, and in the rural homes was second in authority to the Bible itself. Greeley opposed Seward and made Lincoln's nomination possible, but in pledging his support to Lincoln he reiterated his preference for Bates who was now clear out of the picture. During those helpless weeks while President Buchanan was aiding the South to secede, Greeley was writing editorials encouraging the same. Here are specimen sentences from a few which appeared between Lincoln's election and inauguration: three days after the election: "If the cotton states shall become satisfied that they can do better out of the Union than in it, we insist on letting them go in peace. . . . We hope never to live in a republic whereof one section is pinned to another by bayonets." November 30, less than a month after the election: "If eight states having five millions of people choose to separate from us, they cannot be permanently withheld from so doing by Federal cannon." In December, speaking of the Declaration of Independence: "If it justified the secession from the British Empire of three million of colonists in 1776, we do not see why it would not justify the secession of five million of Southerners from the Federal Union in 1861." On February 23, the inauguration still

two weeks away: "Whenever it shall be clear that the great body of the Southern people have become conclusively alienated from the Union and anxious to escape from it, we will do our best to forward their views."

After Ft. Sumter had been fired on, Greeley changed his angle, saying: "Forward to Richmond! Forward to Richmond! The Confederate congress must not be allowed to meet there on the 20th of July."

In response to the demand that Greeley stirred up, the army tried to move on Richmond and met sad defeats which gave opportunity for new blasts against the President's blunders—but they were also Greeley's blunders.

His next untimely outcry was for the immediate emancipation of the slaves, for which even the North was not yet willing, and which would have lost the border states wholesale, as Greeley himself confessed after Lincoln's assassination.

Then after the slaves had been emancipated so far as that great feat could be accomplished by a Presidential proclamation in states already in rebellion against that very authority, Greeley raised a clamor against the great loss of life; the war must cease; we must have peace at any price—a policy which would have meant that the blood already shed was lost indeed, for the South would have won its independence, and slavery would have continued indefinitely. Greeley was always looking to the consummation devoutly to be wished, and always declining to recognize those

intermediate steps necessary to bring about the desired results. Late in 1861 Greeley proposed to give Lincoln his whole support in exchange for news priority for *The Tribune*, an offer which Lincoln hastened to accept, saying: "He is a great power. Having him firmly behind me will be as helpful to me as an army of one hundred thousand men." Yet Greeley continued to throw his one hundred thousand man power and weight against the President to the last, urging compromise with the South, and seeking some other candidate for President in 1864.

What with the rebellion in the South, the opposition in the North, the continual threat of secession by Border States, the threatened invasion of Mexico by France, the running of the blockade by the British, the inefficient leadership in the army, the jealousies and rivalry of the Cabinet members, the cries for peace throughout the whole nation, the opposition of the press, and the sorrows within his own home, few men have been called to exercise so much of Christian grace and fortitude as the President who guided us through the greatest crisis of our Nation's history. Some have called him "the Man of Sorrows," but that name must be distinctly reserved for that infinitely greater One who "hath born our griefs and carried our sorrows."

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE WIDENESS OF HIS MERCY

Laxness in discipline is the inherent weakness of democracy. "All men are created equal," how then can we pretend to have authority over others, or to dictate how they shall conduct themselves, or how they shall think? Dictatorships, totalitarians have no such scruples, and avoid such difficulties. Lincoln having grown up on the frontier where all were neighbors, was a democrat spelled with a small *d*, and even military exigencies could not erase that feeling from his mind. Every soldier was a neighbor's boy.

"President Lincoln, I pray you not to interfere with the courts-marshall of my army. You will destroy all discipline among our soldiers."—*B. F. Butler.*

Such was a telegram that Lincoln read to a father who had a son in Butler's army of the James, and this son, convicted of a crime, was under sentence to be shot the next week. After the old father had sat in the ante-room of the Executive Chamber two days, weeping, while he waited for an interview with the President, every word of the dispatch sounded like the death knell to the sobbing father. It was too much for Lincoln:

"By jingo, Butler or no Butler, here goes!" and he wrote a memorandum and handed it to the old man whose rekindled hopes were dashed again as he read:

“Job Smith is not to be shot until further orders from me.—*Abraham Lincoln.*”

“Why I thought it was to be a pardon; but you say, ‘not to be shot until further orders,’ and you may order him to be shot next week.”

“Well, my old friend,” said the smiling President, “I see you are not very well acquainted with me. If your son never looks on death till further orders come to shoot him, he will live to be a great deal older than Methuselah.”<sup>1</sup>

An officer, during the first week of his command, sent to the President the death warrants of twenty-four deserters to be signed. Upon the President’s refusal to sign, he went to Washington in person, and said, “Mr. President, unless these men are made an example of, the army itself is in danger. Mercy to the few is cruelty to the many.”

Lincoln’s reply was: “General, there are already too many weeping widows in the United States. Don’t ask me to add to the number, for I won’t do it.”<sup>2</sup>

On another occasion, after signing the pardon of a young man he said, “I could not think of going into eternity with the blood of the poor young man on my skirts. It is not to be wondered at that a boy, raised on a farm, probably in the habit of going to bed at dark, should, when required to watch, fall asleep; I cannot consent to shoot him for such an act.”<sup>3</sup>

Yet one must not get the impression that Mr.

<sup>1</sup>D. D. Thompson, *Life of Lincoln*, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 84, 85.

Lincoln pardoned offenders as the easiest way out of an unpleasant situation. The very consideration he gave their several cases caused him pain, but to have sent them to their death in most cases would have been to him unbearable. Schuyler Colfax, Speaker of the House of Representatives in Lincoln's administration, wrote in *Rice's Reminiscences of Lincoln*:

No man clothed with such vast power ever wielded it more tenderly and more forebearingly. No man holding in his hands the key of life and death ever pardoned so many offenders, and so easily. Judge Bates, of Missouri, his Attorney-General, insisted that lack of sternness was a marked defect in Lincoln's character. He told Mr. Lincoln once in my presence that this defect made him unfit to be trusted with the pardoning power. Any touching story, especially one told by a woman, was certain to warp, if not to control, his decision.

One winter night, while Congress was in session, I left all other business and asked him to pardon the son of a former constituent sentenced to be shot at Davenport Barracks, Iowa, for desertion. He heard the story with his usual patience, although worried out with incessant calls and cares, then replied:

"Some of my generals complain that I impair discipline by my frequent pardons and reprieves; but it rests me, after a day's hard work, that I can find some excuse for saving some poor fellow's life; and I shall go to bed happy tonight as I think how joyous the signing of this name will make himself, his family, and friends!" And with a smile beaming on his care-furrowed face, he signed that name and saved that life.<sup>4</sup>

There are so many of these pardon stories that some enterprising student of history may some day gather them into a separate volume, but if

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 83, 84.



the work were complete it might take more than one volume. Here is one of those better known :

Private William Scott had had a long day's march, and had been a sentry all the night before, but when the night came again, and a sick friend of his was chosen sentry, he volunteered to take his friend's place. But Private Scott was a farmer's boy, and he had not been used to being awake nights, and he was found asleep at his post. The army was in a dangerous neighborhood at Chain Bridge, and discipline must be preserved. He was sentenced to be shot. They sent to Mr. Lincoln to see if he could do anything, if he could pardon him. At first he said he could not; then he told them that he would go down to Chain Bridge to see the boy.

Private Scott was in his tent waiting to be shot, when the flap was raised, and there stood Mr. Lincoln. Scott said he knew him to be Mr. Lincoln by a medal he wore of him. He said he was very much frightened to be in the presence of so great a man. Mr. Lincoln began to talk to him, and asked where he was from. He told him from Vermont. Mr. Lincoln asked him about the farm, and about his mother. Private Scott told him he was very glad that he had the picture of his mother in his blouse, and took it out and showed it to Mr. Lincoln. He looked at it, and said: "My boy, you ought to be very proud and glad that your mother is living. You never ought to act so as to make her cheeks blush."

As he went on talking, Private Scott said he had made up his mind that he was going to die, and he was just about to ask Mr. Lincoln if he would not see to it that none of the boys of his regiment shot him, because he said, "I thought I could not stand that. But," he says, "Mr. Lincoln told me to stand up, and I stood up; and he put his hands on my shoulders, and said: 'Private Scott, look me in the eye.' Then he said, 'Private Scott, I don't believe you are a coward, but you are a good soldier; I am not going to have you shot; I am going to send you back to your regiment. How will you pay my bill?'" And

Private Scott said: "I am very much obliged to you. I had made up my mind I must die; but I guess we can pay your bill. I can put a mortgage on the farm, and when pay day comes around some of the boys will help, and I will give you all of my pay, and it may be \$500 or \$600, and I guess we can pay your bill."

Mr. Lincoln said, "Private Scott, there is only one man who can pay my bill, and that is William Scott. If from this moment you promise to be the best soldier that you possibly can be; if you are true to the old flag, and if, when you come to die, and I were there, you could look me in the eye and say, 'Mr. Lincoln, I have kept my promise, and been the best soldier to the old flag that I possibly could be,' then you will pay my bill." Mr. Lincoln left, and afterwards there was never such a soldier as Private Scott. He asked that he might do the hardest kind of duty in the hospital, so that he might teach himself how to keep awake nights. There was never a man whose uniform was more clean than his. And when the battle struck there never was a braver man. It was at the awful battles of the Wilderness, and he had accomplished prodigies of valor, and had carried back officer after officer from the bloody field, where at last he fell, shattered all to pieces. At last the battle was done. They bore him back, and his comrades gathered around him. He looked at them with a sweet smile and said: "Boys, I have fought my last battle, and I think I tried to do my duty. I guess you can tell my mother that; and then, boys" . . . and he breathed heavily . . . "if you should ever any of you see Mr. Lincoln, I wish you would tell him that I tried to keep . . . my promise . . . and be true to the old flag . . . good bye boys," and he died.<sup>5</sup>

This readiness to pardon transgressors, however much it displeased the higher officers, endeared him to the soldiers who knew they had an advocate and a friend in the White House. When Jacob was blessing Joseph, he said: "Joseph is a

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 92-94.

fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a fountain; his branches run over the wall." Lincoln was so human, so tender, so fruitful in kindness that his branches sometimes shed their fruit on the other side of the wall that divided North from South.

Summoned once by General McClellan, Lincoln and Stanton arrived on the field of battle, as the lanterns of those who were carrying off the dead and the wounded were weaving in and out like numberless fireflies. He heard the voice of a wounded boy calling for his mother. He stopped the bearers, and knelt over the boy.

"What can I do for you, my poor child?"

"Oh, you will do nothing for me. You are a Yankee. I cannot hope that my messages to my mother will ever reach her."

But the tears in Lincoln's eyes, not to say in his voice, dispelled all doubts of his sincerity, and the boy gave his farewell message without reserve. Lincoln had the words set down, and sent by flag of truce immediately into the enemy lines. Then entering the waiting ambulance, he said to his friend, Mark Lemon, his sobs confirming his words, "Mark, my heart is breaking. Sing me something: sing the old song I love, 'Oft in the Stilly Night.'"<sup>6</sup>

A few days before his assassination when the President was returning from Richmond, he stopped at City Point, insisting that he should visit all the hospitals and shake hands with every one of the five or six thousand wounded and sick soldiers there, and give them each a personal word

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

of appreciation for their service to their country. As he passed from bed to bed, he was recognized by a wounded rebel prisoner who raised himself on his elbow, and extended his hand, the tears flowing down his cheeks as he spoke:

"Mr. Lincoln, I have long wanted to see you, to ask your forgiveness for ever raising my hand against the old flag."

The President accepted the apology, joined heartily in the handshake, and contributed his share of the tears.

The kindness of Lincoln played a great part in the ending of the war and the rebellion of the South. It spoke forth in his second inaugural address when it was evident that the war was all but over: "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; to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations."

*"With charity for all; with firmness in the right"*—what magnificent words, and how magnificently they summed up Lincoln's heart! When Stephens, Vice President of the Confederacy, and others came to negotiate peace with Lincoln in the hope of securing an independent Confederacy, they found that "firmness in the right," for his basic condition was "unconditional surrender." "I understand then," said Stephens, "that you re-

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 94-96.

gard us as rebels, who are liable to be hanged for treason."

"Yes; that is so."

"Well, we supposed that would have to be your view. But to tell you the truth, we have none of us been much afraid of being hanged with you as President." That was his "malice toward none."

But there was much strong talk in the North that the high political and military officers ought to receive the full penalty of the law,—hanging for treason. Here again Lincoln's "charity for all" and his "firmness for the right" were manifested, for he exclaimed, "What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? Shall there any man this day be put to death in Israel?"

On the morning of that fatal day of his assassination, he spoke these words to his Cabinet: "No one need expect me to take any part in hanging or killing these men, even the worst of them. Frighten them out of the country, open the gates, let down the bars, scare them off. Shoo!" (throwing up his hands as if to drive a flock of sheep).

"With firmness in the right"—Lincoln did not pardon every offender. An African slave trader, sentenced to five years imprisonment and one thousand dollars fine, served his time, but lacked the money for the fine. He wrote the Honorable John B. Alley of Lynn, Massachusetts a penitent letter, acknowledging his guilt and the justice of the sentence, and appealed for release. Mr. Alley read the letter to the President who seemed to be touched by its pathos. But his answer was:

“My friend, this is a very touching appeal to our feelings. You know my weakness is to be, if possible, too easily touched by appeals for mercy, and, if this man were guilty of the foulest murder that the arm of man could perpetrate, I might forgive him on such an appeal; but the man who could go to Africa, and rob her of her children, and sell them into interminable bondage, with no other motive than that which is furnished by dollars and cents, is so much worse than the most depraved murderer, that he can never receive pardon at my hands. No! He may rot in jail before he shall have liberty by any act of mine.”<sup>1</sup>

“Love never fails,” says that Scripture, but Lincoln’s love almost failed on one occasion. Worn out by a year and a half of personal attention to appeals for office, appeals for pardon, and trying to keep in touch with all the people, the limit of endurance was near. In the evening of a heavy day a colonel just back from sick leave, came to the President with a sad story. His wife who had been nursing him in the hospital was on her way home, there had been a steamboat collision and she was drowned. Her body had just been recovered and he was asking leave to attend to its disposal. Due to the imminence of a battle Stanton had refused his application, so he came to the ever merciful Lincoln. He found him sitting alone, coatless and surrounded by papers demanding attention. Lincoln heard his story in silence, then burst out:

“Am I to have no rest? Is there no hour or

<sup>1</sup>Thompson, D. D., Abraham Lincoln, p. 155, 156.

spot where I can escape these constant calls? Why do you follow me here with such business as this? Why do you not go to the War Office where they have charge of all this matter of papers and transportation? The Secretary of War has refused? Then probably you ought to go down the river. . . . You should remember that I have other duties to attend to. . . . Why do you come here to appeal to my humanity? Don't you know that we are in the midst of war? That suffering and death press upon all of us? . . . There is but one duty now—to fight. . . . Your wife might have trusted you to the care which the government has provided for its sick soldiers. At any rate you must not vex me with your family troubles. Why every family of the land is crushed with sorrow; but they must not each come to me for help. I have all the burden I can carry."

The disappointed officer who had heard so much of Lincoln's kindness went away with a heavy heart, probably to a sleepless night. But early the next morning there was a knock at his door. On opening it, there stood the President who grasped his hand: "My dear Colonel, I was a brute last night. I have no excuse for my conduct. Indeed I was weary to the last extent; but I had no right to treat with rudeness a man who had offered his life for his country, especially a man who came to me in great affliction. I have had a regretful night, and now come to beg your forgiveness." He had arranged everything, seen Stanton, brought the pass, and a carriage was waiting to drive them to the wharf together.<sup>8</sup>

Shakespeare tells us that Mercy "is twice

blessed; it blesses him that gives and him that takes." Not always, William. It may be twice cursed. It may curse "him that gives" by making him the victim of every imposter with a sob story and every lazybones who would rather beg from those on his "suckers' list" than earn an honest dollar; and it sometimes curses "him that takes" by pauperizing him, letting him lie lazily waiting for "the moving of the water" when he should "take up his bed and walk." Blessed is that man who can, like the Master, so mix his kindness with common sense, that it puts the pauper on his own feet and sends him forth out of his difficulty on his own power. The following letter of Lincoln to his step-brother is a model piece of literature, for it gives us a character sketch and the life history of the said John Johnston with one stroke of the pen, and with the second stroke gives us the picture of real philanthropy, generous, wise, practical, offering a bonus up to the amount the man is willing to put forth his own effort in his own community, however small the remuneration, and firmly refusing to be victimized as an "easy mark."

Dear Johnston, your request for eighty dollars I do not think it best to comply with now. At the various times when I have helped you a little, you have said to me, "We can get along very well now"; but in a very short time I find you in the same difficulty again. Now, this can only happen by some defect in your conduct. What the defect is, I think I know. You are not lazy, and still you are an idler. I doubt whether, since I saw you, you have done a good day's work in any one day. You do not very much dislike to work, and still you do not work much merely because it does not seem to you that you could get much for it. This habit of uselessly



wasting time is the whole difficulty; it is vastly important to you, and still more so to your children, that you should break the habit. It is more important to them, because they have longer to live, and can keep out of an idle habit before they are in it, easier than they can get out after they are in. You are now in need of some money; and what I propose is, that you shall go to work, "Tooth and nail," for somebody who will give you money for it. Let father and your boys take charge of your things at home, prepare for a crop, and make the crop, and you go to work for the best money wages, or in discharge of any debt you owe, that you can get; and, to secure you a fair reward for your labor, I now promise you, that for every dollar you will, between this and the first of May, get for your own labor, either in money or as your own indebtedness, I will then give you one other dollar. By this, if you hire yourself at ten dollars a month, from me you will get ten more, making twenty dollars a month for your work. In this I do not mean that you shall go off to St. Louis, or the lead mines, or the gold mines in California but I mean for you to go at it for the best wages you can get close to home in Coles County. Now, if you will do this, you will soon be out of debt, and, what is better, you will have a habit that will keep you from getting in debt again. But if I should now clear you out of debt, next year you would be just as deep in as ever. You say you would almost give your place in heaven for seventy or eighty dollars. Then you value your place in heaven very cheap, for I am sure you can, with the offer I make, get the seventy or eighty dollars for four or five months' work. You say if I will furnish you the money you will deed me the land, that if you don't pay the money back, you will deliver possession. Nonsense! If you can't now live with the land, how will you then live without it? You have always been kind to me, and I do not mean to be unkind to you. On the contrary, if you will but follow my advice, you will find it worth more than eighty times eighty dollars to you. Affectionately your brother,

A. LINCOLN

## CHAPTER XVIII

### LINCOLN VS. LIQUOR

Not many years ago, large distilling interests conceived the big idea of capitalizing on the name of Lincoln. They would purchase the site of the log cabin where the future President was born, build a large distillery, and name their brand of whiskey "Lincoln." The fact that it came from the very birthplace of Lincoln would be a big advertisement in itself. In addition it would give the impression that Lincoln favored the manufacture and sale of whiskey and thereby help their nefarious business by capitalizing on a lie and what a lie that would have been! But this child of the great deceiver would not have been adverse to that.

But fortunately for truth and temperance, they talked too loud on the train enroute to carry out their plan, and providentially a well-to-do friend of temperance overheard them, got off the train, hired a livery team, and drove overland, and while they were traveling by the railroad junction, he completed the transaction, purchasing the property for \$25,000, if memory serves me right.

Another fraudulent effort to exploit Lincoln's name and fame in the interests of whiskey was made by the German American Alliance in 1908. They published the facsimile of the "Berry & Lincoln" liquor license. The license "ordered that William F. Berry, in the name of Berry & Lincoln,

have a license to keep a tavern in New Salem." Note that wording—"that William F. Berry . . . have a license." The names attached to the bond are Abraham Lincoln, William F. Berry and Bowlin Greene. But the Alliance overshot the mark in publishing the facsimile, for Lincoln's name is not in his handwriting but was probably written by Berry. Ida M. Tarbell had previously examined the original bond and had published this fact, and the Alliance was good enough to furnish the evidence for examination by the general public.

But the historical details of the affair were published in 1888 in a monumental work brought out by the editor of the *North American Review*, Allan Thorndyke Rice. For this work the Hon. Leonard Swett, a staunch lawyer friend of Lincoln who was well acquainted with his early life, prepared an article in which he says that when Lincoln's partner proposed to sell liquor, a sharp division arose which resulted in the desolving of the partnership. His statement follows:

A difference, however, soon arose between him and the old proprietor, the present partner of Lincoln, in reference to the introduction of whiskey into the establishment. The partner insisted that, on the principle that honey catches flies, a barrel of whiskey in the store would invite custom and their sales would increase, while Lincoln, who never liked liquor, opposed this innovation. He told me, not more than a year before he was elected President, that he had never tasted liquor in his life. "What!" I said, "do you mean to say you never tasted it?" "Yes, I never tasted it." The result was that a bargain was made by which Lincoln should retire from his partnership in the store. He was to step out as he

stepped in. He had nothing when he stepped in, and he had nothing when he stepped out. But the partner took all the goods, and agreed to pay all the debts, for a part of which Mr. Lincoln had become jointly liable."

Whiskey seems to have been about as popular in those parts when and where Lincoln grew up as it has at any time since. You will recall that when Tom Lincoln sold his farm in Kentucky, the consideration was \$50 cash and eight barrels of whiskey, valued at \$25.00 each. Also when Tom Lincoln contributed for a new chimney for the Baptist church at Little Pigeon Creek, his gift was "White Corn, manufactured—pounds—24." Whiskey seems to have been legal tender, even in a church contribution. Lucre was never more filthy than then.

But let Lincoln himself tell us just how popular drink was in his youth, or should we say, how unpopular total abstinence was.

When all such of us, as have now reached the years of maturity, first opened our eyes upon the stage of existence, we found intoxicating liquor recognized by everybody, used by everybody, and repudiated by nobody. It commonly entered into the first draught of the infant, and the last draught of the dying man. From the sideboard of the parson, down to the ragged pocket of the houseless loafer, it was constantly found. Physicians prescribed it in this, that, and the other disease. Government provided it for its soldiers and sailors; and to have a rolling or raising, a husking or hoe-down anywhere without it was positively insufferable.

So, too, it was everywhere a respectable article of manufacture and of merchandise. The making of it was regarded as an honorable livelihood; and he who could make most was the most enterprising and respectable. Large and small manufactories of it were everywhere

created, in which all the earthly goods of their owners were invested. Wagons drew it from town to town—boats bore it from clime to clime, and the winds wafted it from nation to nation; and merchants bought and sold it, by wholesale and by retail, with precisely the same feelings, on the part of seller, buyer, and bystander, as are felt at the selling and buying of flour, beef, bacon, or any other of the real necessities of life. Universal public opinion not only tolerated, but recognized and adopted its use.

It is true, that even then, it was known and acknowledged that many were greatly injured by it but none seemed to think that the injury arose from the use of a bad thing, but from the abuse of a very good thing. The victims to it were pitied, and compassionated, just as they now are heirs of consumption, and other hereditary diseases. Their failing was treated as a misfortune, and not as a crime, or even as a disgrace.<sup>1</sup>

Yet Dennis Hanks describes Tom Lincoln as “a man that didn’t drink an’ cuss none.” And the same could be said of his honored son, for though it was a regular part of social gatherings, Lincoln “dared to be a Daniel, dared to stand alone.” Hanks says, “Abe was strictly moral. He never drank liquor, never used tobacco, and never swore.”

David Charles Baker says in *Lincoln versus Liquor*, “Lincoln repeatedly told friends that he had never drank liquor. Companions of his youth, those who were closely associated with him at New Salem, men of his company in the Black Hawk War, his law partners, and lawyers who rode the circuit with him for many years, all testify to the fact that he was a total abstainer.”

Lincoln was a physical giant, not only in height but in strength. Denton Offut bragged continu-

<sup>1</sup>Lincoln’s Temperance Address in Springfield in 1842.

ally of his clerk's strength, and that he could out-run, outthrow, or whip any one in New Salem. This brought about the famous wrestling match with Jack Armstrong who later became his very intimate friend, whose son he later defended in a murder charge. Another of his boosters was William Greene who claimed he was the strongest man in Illinois. A stranger challenged his statement, saying he knew a stronger man.

"How much will he lift?" asked Greene.

"A barrel of flour."

"Abe will lift two."

"That's a great story," laughed the stranger.

"Great story or not, I'll bet you a hat that Abe will lift a barrel of whiskey, holding forty gallons, and drink from the bung-hole."

The wager was accepted and they went to the store where Lincoln was employed and told their errand. Lincoln said: "I don't think much of the betting part, but I guess I will help William out of the affair." Whereupon he performed the feat.

"That is the first dram of whiskey I ever saw you drink," said Greene to Lincoln. Lincoln put down the barrel, spurted the whiskey on the floor, saying, "And I haven't drunk that, you see." Green, in writing this story to William M. Thayer, Lincoln's biographer, says that in the evening following the affair, Lincoln lectured him on the betting and secured his promise that he would never do it again.

Lincoln was fond of telling of the old Kentuckian who was his traveling companion on a long, tiresome stage-coach journey. In return for

Lincoln's entertaining stories, he produced a bottle of French brandy and offered Lincoln a drink. "I never drink," was Lincoln's reply. Later he offered his tobacco. "I never use tobacco." When they came to the parting, the man shook hands warmly and said: "See here, stranger you are a clever, but strange companion; I may never see you again, and I don't want to offend you, but I say that my experience has taught me that a man who has no vices has ——— few virtues. Good-day."

One reason Lincoln held so firmly to his heart's purpose not to defile himself with strong drink came to light during his term in Congress in 1847. A fellow Congressman reproached him for declining to partake of the rare wines provided by their host, to whom Lincoln replied that he meant no disrespect, but that he had made a solemn promise to his mother just a few days before her death that he would never use anything intoxicating as a beverage "and I consider that pledge as binding today as it was the day I gave it." The friend urged that the conditions of his mature manhood and in a home of refinement were different from those in which he had made the promise in his childhood, to which specious argument Lincoln replied: "But a promise is a promise forever and when made to a mother it is doubly binding." No wonder he sometimes said: "Blessings on her memory!"

Captain J. R. Fitch of Evanston, Illinois, tells of Mr. Lincoln speaking in Leavenworth, Kansas in 1859. After the address, some friends were

invited to the home of Judge Delanay where Lincoln was being entertained. The refreshments included wine of which almost everyone except Lincoln partook. Fitch says in the *Northwestern Christian Advocate*: "The next day, we escorted him to the train; and to my dying day I shall never forget our parting. I was only twenty-two years old. Mr. Lincoln bade each one good-bye, and gave them a hearty grasp of the hand. He bade me good-bye last, and, as he took my hand in both of his, and stood there towering above me, he looked down into my eyes with that sad, kindly look of his and said:

"My young friend, do not put an enemy into your mouth to steal away your brains."

Andrew Shuman, who afterwards became the Lieutenant governor of Illinois, was correspondent for a Chicago daily, and traveled the state of Illinois in the Lincoln-Douglas senatorial campaign of 1858. Missing their train in a cross-roads town, they stayed in a tavern over night. He says: "After supper Lincoln sat in the public room of the town tavern for an hour, talking familiarly with the loungers of the town. Every man present, Lincoln excepted, smoked or chewed tobacco, and occasionally indulged at the bar."

Rev. John Talmadge Bergen, D.D., relates the following, which at the present time is of special interest:

Some years ago at a Lincoln meeting among the old soldiers of a Michigan city, one of the battle-worn veterans gave the following testimony: "We have heard what Lincoln has done for all of us. I want to tell you what he did for me. I was a private in one of the western



regiments that arrived first in Washington after the call for 75,000. We were marching through the city amid great crowds of cheering people, and then, after going into camp, were given leave to see the town.

Like many other boys, the saloon or tavern was the first thing we hit. With my comrade I was just about to go into the door of one of these places, when a hand was laid upon my arm, and looking up, there was President Lincoln from his great height above me, a mere lad, regarding me with those kindly eyes and pleasant smile.

I almost dropped with surprise and bashfulness, but he held out his hand, and as I took it he shook hands in strong Western fashion and said: "I don't like to see our uniforms going into these places." That was all he said. He turned immediately, and walked away and we passed on. We would not have gone into that tavern for all the wealth of Washington City.

And that is what Abraham Lincoln did then and there for me. He fixed me so that whenever I go near a saloon and in any way think of entering, his words and face come back to me. That experience has been a means of salvation to my life. Today I hate the saloon, and have hated it ever since I heard those words from that great man.<sup>1</sup>

President Lincoln visited Grant's headquarters in 1865, traveling by the *River Queen*, and suffering from seasickness on the way, someone prescribed champagne as a remedy. "No, my young friend," Lincoln replied decisively, "I have seen many a man in my time seasick ashore from drinking that very article."<sup>2</sup>

The liquor interests have tried hard to make out that Lincoln drank occasionally, but everything seems to show that he was unequivocally and unalterably opposed to liquor. Had he not spent

<sup>1</sup>Ervin Chapman, *Latest Light on Lincoln*, pp. 531, 532.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Coffin, *Life of Lincoln*, p. 489.

many years of his life paying the debts of his drinking store partner in New Salem? Had he not continually been brought into touch with the evil of the drink habit in his law practice? The nearest to any evidence they can produce is the testimony of Herndon and Lamon, that on the day when the nominating vote for the Presidency was being taken in Chicago, Lincoln was trying to control his nervous anxiety in Springfield. Lamon says: "Early in the morning, he (Mr. Baker) and Mr. Lincoln went to the ball-alley to play at 'fives' but the alley was pre-engaged. They went to an 'excellent and neat beer saloon' to play a game of billiards; but the table was occupied. In this strait they contented themselves with a glass of beer, and repaired to *The Journal* office for news."

"Whether that "a glass of beer" was drunk by Mr. Baker alone, or whether there were in fact two glasses of beer, Mr. Herndon had a better chance to learn than I. But immediately on the adjournment of that convention, when his Springfield friends learned that the Notification Committee headed by Governor Morgan of New York were coming to their city, they proposed to provide liquors as fitting hospitality for such an occasion. In expressing appreciation of their well meant offer, Lincoln said: "I have never been in the habit of entertaining my friends in that way and I cannot permit my friends to do for me what I will not myself do. I shall provide cold water—nothing else." On conclusion of the notification ceremonies, Mr. Lincoln remarked that so inter-

esting and important an occasion would require that he should furnish the Committee with something to drink. He opened the door, calling, "Mary, Mary," and spoke to the maid in an undertone. Soon she appeared with a pitcher and tumblers and placed them on a center table. Mr. Lincoln arose, and said gravely :

"Gentlemen, we must pledge our mutual health in the most healthful beverage that God has given to men. It is the only beverage I have ever used or allowed my family to use, and I cannot conscientiously depart from it on the present occasion. It is pure Adam's ale from the spring." Touching the tumbler to his lips, he pledged them his faithfulness in a cup of cold water. If they were disappointed in the drink, they had a new admiration for the consistency of the man who gave it. The historian Abbott says that in anticipation of the visit of this Committee, Lincoln's friends had sent him several hampers of wine for their entertainment. "But Lincoln was not only a temperance man, but a total abstinence man. Resolved not to allow that new temptation to swerve him from his principles, he returned the gift with kindest words of gratitude for the favor intended."

Maybe those who would like to claim Lincoln as an advocate of strong drink can find a little comfort in his reply to the self-appointed committee who waited on the President just previous to the fall of Vicksburg, seeking the removal of General Grant from his command "for the sake of the morale of the army." In great surprise Lincoln

asked their reasons. "Why he drinks too much whiskey." "Ah!" said Lincoln, dropping his lower lip. "By the way, gentlemen, can either of you tell me where Grant procures his whiskey? Because, if I can find out, I will send every general in the field a barrel of it." David Homer Bates in his *Lincoln in the Telegraph Office* (p. 197) says: "Lincoln disclaimed this story in my hearing, stating that King George II of England was said to have remarked, when he was told that General Wolfe, then in command of the English army in Canada, was mad, that he wished that Wolfe would bite some of his other generals."

On February 22, 1842 (Washington's birthday) Lincoln addressed the Washington Temperance Society in the Presbyterian Church of Springfield, Illinois. This speech has been quoted piecemeal and garbled by the wets to make it appear that Lincoln was opposed to prohibition. That is absolutely false. The speech in full may be found in almost any library. But its substance is this: He first congratulates them on the very rapid progress of temperance sentiment during the last twenty years, and attributes it to new methods of attack. Past advocates denounced the drunkards and the dram sellers, whereas the Washingtonians approach them as friends and companions, endeavoring to persuade them to change their life habits. The old reformers looked on them as incorrigible, but the new way is to teach—

"While the lamp holds out to burn;

The vilest sinner may return."

He urged all to sign the pledge, though they might

not need it for themselves: if for no other reason, they would help to make it fashionable.

Let us make it as unfashionable to withhold our names from the temperance pledge as for husbands to wear their wives' bonnets to church, and instances will be as rare in one case as the other.

"But," say some, "we are no drunkards and shall not acknowledge ourselves as such by joining a reformed drunkards' society, whatever our influence might be." Surely no Christian will adhere to this objection.

If they believe, as they profess, that Omnipotence condescended to take on Himself the form of sinful man, and, as such, to die an ignominious death for their sakes, surely they will not refuse submission to the infinitely lesser condescension, for the temporal, and, perhaps, eternal salvation of a large, erring and unfortunate class of their fellow creatures. Nor is the condescension very great. In my judgment, such of us as have not fallen victims have been spared more from the absence of appetite than from any mental or moral superiority over those who have. Indeed, I believe, if we take habitual drunkards as a class, their heads and their hearts will bear an advantageous comparison with any other class. There seems ever to have been a proneness in the brilliant and warm blooded to fall into this vice—the demon of intemperance ever seems to have delighted in sucking the blood of genius and of generosity. What one of us but can call to mind some relative, more promising in youth than all his fellows, who has fallen a sacrifice to his rapacity? He ever seems to have gone forth like the Egyptian angel of Death, commissioned to slay, if not the first, the fairest born, of every family. Shall he now be arrested in his desolating career? In that arrest, all can give aid that will; and who shall be excused that can, and will not? Far around as human breath has ever blown, he keeps our fathers, our brothers, our sons, and our friends prostrate in the chains of moral death. To all the living elsewhere, we cry, "Come, sound the moral

trump, that there may rise and stand up an exceeding great army." "Come from the four winds, O breath! and breathe upon these slain that they may live." If the relative grandeur of revolutions shall be estimated by the great amount of human misery they alleviate, and the small amount they inflict, then, indeed, will this be the grandest the world shall ever have seen.

Of our political revolution of '76 we were all justly proud. It has given us a degree of political freedom far exceeding that of any other nation of the earth. In it the world has found a solution of the long mooted problem as to the capability of man to govern himself. In it is the germ which has vegetated, and still is to grow and expand into the universal liberty of mankind.

But, with all these glorious results, past, present, and to come, it had its evils, too. It breathed forth famine, swam in blood, and rode in fire; and long, long after, the orphan's cry and the widow's wail continued to break the sad silence that ensued. These were the price, the inevitable price, paid for the blessings it brought.

Turn now, to the temperance revolution. In it we shall find stronger bondage broken, a viler slavery manumitted, a greater tyrant deposed—in it, more of want supplied, more disease healed; more sorrow assauged. By it, no orphans, no starving, no widows weeping. By it, none wounded in feeling, none injured in interest; even the dram-maker and dram-seller will have glided into other occupations so gradually as never to have felt the change, and will stand ready to join all others in the universal song of gladness. And what a noble ally this is to the cause of political freedom! With such an aid, its march cannot fail to be on and on, till every son of earth shall drink, in rich fruition, the sorrow-quenching draughts of perfect liberty. Happy days, when all appetites controlled, all poisons subdued, all matters subjected, mind, all-conquering mind, shall live and move, the monarch of the world. Glorious consummation! Hail, fall of fury! Reign of reason, all hail!

And when the victory shall be complete; when there

shall be neither a slave or a drunkard on the earth, how proud the title of that Land which may truly claim to be the birth place and the cradle of both these revolutions that shall have ended in that victory! How nobly distinguished that people, who shall have planted and nurtured to maturity, both the political and moral freedom of their species!

But it must not be understood that this was the only speech Lincoln ever made on behalf of Temperance. He began young and continued to speak for that cause until slavery threatened to extend its territory to cover the whole nation and he went to battle this challenging Goliath. On September 29, 1863, he said in response to an address from the Sons of Temperance: "If I were better known than I am, you would not need to be told that in the advocacy of the cause of Temperance you have a friend and sympathizer in me. When I was a young man—long ago—before the Sons of Temperance as an organization had an existence, I, in a humble way, made temperance speeches, and I think I may say to this day I have never, by my example, belied what I then said."<sup>3</sup>

The influence of those speeches still lives, for we have an account of one of many of such meetings, thanks to two boys, one nineteen, one ten years of age who attended it. It was held in the grove near the newly-built South Forks School House in Sangamon County, Illinois, in 1847—the year Lincoln went to Congress—and was attended by a large crowd who sat on the logs and stumps left over from the new building. The young

<sup>3</sup>Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln, Vol. IX, p. 144.

statesman spoke fervently and eloquently, pointing out the evils of intemperance and pleading with all to sign the pledge; so impressively in fact that Moses Martin, the nineteen year old boy, committed the pledge and recited it fifty-seven years later at the launching of the Lincoln-Legion branch of the Anti-Saloon League in Oberlin, Ohio in 1904. He led the audience on that occasion in repeating it verbatim with uplifted hands:

Whereas, The use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage is productive of pauperism, degradation and crime: and believing it our duty to discourage that which produces more evil than good, we therefore pledge ourselves to abstain from the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage.

The ten year old boy was Cleopas Breckenridge, son of the farmer who had arranged with Mr. Lincoln about the meeting. Lincoln said to him, "Sonny, don't you want your name to be on this pledge?" The boy was eager to sign but couldn't write, so that the hand that later signed the Emancipation Proclamation signed for him. This event is commemorated in the drawing by Arthur I. Keller reproduced on another page, with Lincoln with his hand on the boy's head, saying in unforgettable tender tones, "Now, Sonny, you keep that pledge and it will be the best act of your life." Breckenridge was also present at the meeting in Oberlin, and declared that he had kept the pledge inviolate.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Erwin Chapman, Latest Light on Abraham Lincoln, pp. 147-149.





Lincoln Pledging Cleopas Breckinridge  
to Total Abstinence

Drawing by Arthur I. Keller

Courtesy of Fleming H. Revell

## CHAPTER XIX

### TWO FUNDAMENTAL WORDS

In the study of Lincoln's life and speeches one finds two words of his vocabulary recurring with increasing frequency and significance—*right* and *wrong*. They underlay the proverbs that his mother taught him. In thanking the colored people of Baltimore for the gift of a very fine Bible he said of it, "But for it we could not know right from wrong." But having mastered that distinction, life became relatively simple. These were the keys that closed the door against many temptations, so that we find him void of irreverence or profanity, disrespect towards his parents, malice or cruelty, unchastity, intemperance, dishonesty and discontent. But these same keys opened the doors to usefulness and opportunity. He learned to pronounce these words with distinctness and finality, for they were the bed-rock of the foundations of the Universe.

In reading Lincoln's Temperance address of February 22, 1842 one is disappointed by his attitude toward previous reformers and their methods. He has rosy hopes for the Washingtonian Temperance Society whose method is moral suasion and pledge-signing, and he seems to believe that all the grog-sellers need is a little kindly sympathy and they will leave off their selling of the souls of men. The temperance movement was but twenty years old and already

600,000 drinkers had signed the pledge. But he was soon to be disillusioned, for of those, 450,000 returned to their wallowing in the mire.

This led Lincoln to deeper thinking. Might not these words *right* and *wrong* concern society, have an application to the state as well as to the individual? He turned to his Blackstone and read that law "is a rule of civil conduct prescribed by the supreme power of a state commanding what is right and prohibiting what is wrong." He searched other authorities on law and civil jurisprudence and found that they all agreed that only that is law which conforms with the *right* and forbids the *wrong*. He turned to Romans 13 in his Bible and found the functions of civil government defined: "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou not then be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." "The powers that be are ordained of God." "For there is no power but of God." This was the charter of authority for all nations from the King of kings, and its by-laws limited their enactments to righteous laws exclusively. "*This nation under God*" as he phrased it in his Gettysburg Address. This conviction changed the Temperance advocate of 1842 into the Prohibitionist of his later years.

Maine adopted Prohibition in 1851 and the

law was proving so effective and satisfactory that other states followed suit. A campaign was made in Illinois in 1854-1855 in which Lincoln took an active part. J. B. Merwin, founder of the *American Journal of Education* at St. Louis, Missouri came to speak in the campaign and held a meeting in the old State House in Springfield at which Lincoln was present, and at the conclusion of Merwin's address the audience called for Lincoln. He spoke on the principles of law and the purposes and functions of government, and among other things said this:

The law of self-protection is the first and primary law of civilized society. Law is for the protection, conservation and extension of right things, of right conduct, not for the protection of evil and wrongdoing. The state must in its legislative action recognize this truth and protect and promote right conditions and right conduct. This it will accomplish not by any toleration of evils, not by attempting to throw around any evil the shield of law; nor by any attempt to license the evil. This is the first and most important function in the legislation of the modern state. The prohibition of the liquor traffic, except for medical and mechanical purposes, thus becomes the new evangel for the safety and redemption of the people from the social, political and moral curse of the saloon.<sup>1</sup>

Together with Mr. Merwin he spoke at Jacksonville, Bloomington, Decatur, Danville, Carlinville and Peoria, and frequently made use of such statements as these:

This legalized liquor traffic, as carried on in the saloons and grogshops, is the tragedy of civilization. Good citizenship demands and requires that what is right should not

<sup>1</sup>Ervin Chapman, *Latest Light on Abraham Lincoln*, p. 160.

only be made known, but be made prevalent; and that what is evil should not only be defeated, but destroyed. The saloon has proved itself to be the greatest foe, the most blighting curse of our modern civilization, and this is why I am a practical prohibitionist.

We must not be satisfied until the public sentiment of this state, and the individual conscience shall be instructed to look upon the saloonkeeper and the liquor seller, with all the license each can give him, as simply and only a privileged malefactor—a criminal.

The real issue in this controversy, the one pressing upon every mind that gives the subject careful consideration, is that legalizing the manufacture, sale and use of intoxicating liquor as a beverage is a wrong—as all history and every development of the traffic proves it to be—a moral, social, and political wrong.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Lincoln is also quoted as follows on the temperance question :

The liquor traffic is a cancer in society. There must be no more attempts to regulate it. It must be eradicated; not a root must be left behind.

If the prohibition of slavery is good for the black man, the prohibition of the liquor traffic is equally good and constitutional for the white man.

Law must protect and conserve right things, and punish wrong things, and if there is any evil in the land that threatens society or individuals more than another, is it the liquor traffic.

After reconstruction, the next great question will be the overthrow of the liquor traffic.

The most effectual remedy would be the passage of a law altogether abolishing the liquor traffic.

Under the license system the saloons multiply drunkards.

You will see Lincoln attacked the saloon with just about the biggest word in the dictionary—

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 161.

the liquor traffic is "WRONG." How weak are the economic arguments, the scientific arguments and all other arguments in comparison with this: It is contrary to the law of God. Lincoln often put it this way: "The liquor traffic has defenders but no defense." And that was the basis on which he argued for the fifteen women defendants in Clinton in 1855.

These women were indicted in the court for having entered the liquor shop of a Mr. Tanner and knocked in the heads of several barrels of whiskey. Lincoln was present but not on the case, but since the defending attorney was blundering badly, the women asked Lincoln to address the jury. Lincoln used the following argument:

In this case I would change the order of indictment and have it read, The State vs. Mr. Whiskey instead of The State vs. The Ladies; and touching these there are three laws—the law of self-protection, the law of the land, or statute law, and the moral law, or law of God.

First, the law of self-protection is a law of necessity, as evinced by our forefathers in casting the tea overboard and asserting their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In this case it is the only defense the ladies have, for Tanner neither feared God nor regarded man.

Second, the law of the land, or statute law, and Tanner is recreant to both.

Third, the moral law, or law of God, and this is probably a law for the violation of which the jury can fix no punishment. The course pursued by this liquor dealer has been for the demoralization of society. His groggery has been a nuisance. These women, finding all moral suasion of no avail with this fellow, impervious to all tender appeal, alike regardless of their prayers and tears, in order to protect their households and promote the

welfare of the community, united to suppress the nuisance. The good of society demanded its suppression. They accomplished what otherwise could not have been done.

He then climaxed his argument with some personal observations on the ruinous effects of whiskey on society and demanded the suppression of the whole liquor traffic. The women were dismissed.

Politically speaking, prohibition was defeated in the early summer election of 1855 to the great disappointment of both Merwin and Lincoln. But their efforts together were far from lost, for there were repercussions, a salvage of fragments, as it were. On July 17, 1861 a petition was presented to the President that Mr. Merwin be assigned to the work of persuading officers and soldiers of the Union Army to abstain from alcoholic beverages. Knowing his fitness for this work, Lincoln endorsed the petition :

If it be ascertained at the War Department that the President has legal authority to make an appointment as is asked within, and Gen. Scott is of the opinion it will be available for good, then let it be done.

July 17th, 1861

A. LINCOLN<sup>3</sup>

The petition was further endorsed by both General Winfield Scott and Major General B. F. Butler with requests to the officers to give him such rank and make such opportunities as would promote the work, and he was accordingly given the rank of major. After watching the good results of Major Merwin's work in the army, Lincoln wrote this further order :

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 151.

Surgeon General will send Mr. Merwin wherever he may think the public service may require.

July 24, 1862

A. LINCOLN<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Lincoln was always opposed to the licensing of the liquor business, declaring emphatically that every dollar paid as a license tax was an entrenchment for the traffic, making it more difficult than ever to suppress it, logic that has proved sadly true. "Never by licensing an evil can the evil be removed or weakened" was his oft-repeated assertion in his campaign for prohibition in Illinois. The truth of this was soon brought home to him as President. Secretary Chase wrote an Internal Revenue measure with a Federal Tax of twenty dollars for the liquor seller, to which Lincoln objected: "That tax will tend to perpetuate the liquor traffic and I cannot consent to aid in doing that." "But this," said Chase, "is a war measure. It is only a temporary measure for a present emergency, and cannot fasten the liquor traffic upon the nation, for it will be repealed as soon as the war is closed."

Senator Fessenden of Maine, chairman of the Finance Committee, urged its passage by the Senate: "The United States looking at it as a fact that this business as a business is carried on, and looking upon the luxuries and the vices of men as the most proper sources of revenue in the world, just lay their hands upon it and say, if you will do these things you shall pay for it: we lay a tax upon it."<sup>5</sup>

Among the senators opposing it was Senator

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 170, 171.



Wilson from whose telling speech a few quotations will be of interest: "I look upon the liquor trade as grossly immoral, causing more evil than anything else in the country, and I think the Federal Government ought not to derive a revenue from the retail of intoxicating drinks. . . . The man who has paid the Federal Government \$20.00 for a license to retail ardent spirits will feel that he is acting under the authority of the Federal Government and that any regulations, state or municipal, interfering with him are mere temporary and local arrangements, that should yield to the authority of the Federal Government. . . . I would as soon have this Government license gambling houses, or houses of ill-fame; and it would be just as creditable to this Congress. . . . Every senator knows that our army of 500,000 or 600,000 men in the field has been greatly demoralized by the sale and use of rum. . . . This nation comes forward and proposes to give a sort of sanction to the liquor traffic by taking \$20.00 out of the pockets of the men who by dealing out poisons to the people have wrung them from suffering wives and children. . . . There is not a rum seller, or a friend of a rum seller, on this continent that will not welcome this tax. . . . Why, Sir, it has been the struggle of the retailers of rum all over this country for a quarter of a century to adopt this license system and to get licensed. . . . This Government license is a certificate of character. The liquor dealer will so regard it, and he will be proud to shake your certificate in the face of an outraged moral sentiment." (*Congressional Globe*,

pp. 2376-2377.)

Mr. Lincoln was in hearty agreement with all that Senator Wilson said, but yielded to Secretary of the Treasury Chase and signed the bill, saying as he did so: "I would rather lose my right hand than to sign a document that will tend to perpetuate the liquor traffic, and as soon as the exigencies pass away I will turn my whole attention to the repeal of that document." The devil probably laughed to hear that for he had heard that kind of promises so many times, but Mr. Lincoln meant every word.

President Lincoln discussed the liquor question with Major Merwin on several occasions after that and reiterated that it was his purpose to have that license measure repealed. Their last conversation on the subject was on the very day of the assassination. On special invitation Major Merwin was a dinner guest at the White House. Lincoln said exultingly: "Merwin, we have cleaned up with the help of the people a colossal job. Slavery is abolished. After reconstruction the next question will be the overthrow and the abolition of the liquor traffic and you know, Merwin, that my head and heart and hand and purse will go into that work. In 1842—less than a quarter of a century ago—I predicted, under the influence of God's Spirit, that a time would come when there would be neither a slave nor a drunkard in the land. Thank God, I have lived to see one of these prophecies fulfilled. I hope to see the other realized." Merwin was leaving for New York City that night on an important mission for the President, and said, "Mr. Lincoln,

shall I publish this from you?" "Yes," said the President emphatically, "publish it as widely as the daylight shines." Merwin's joy over that statement was to be cruelly quenched when he learned on his arrival in New York that the President had been assassinated. If the devil had heard Lincoln's statement, he didn't laugh that time but went out to do quickly his devilish work "and it was night."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 174, 175.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE NATIONAL CONSCIENCE AWAKENED

We have seen how Mr. Lincoln by studying the fundamental basis of law and the sacred functions of civil government arrived at the conclusion that governments have no divine authority to license the liquor traffic, because *it is wrong*. There is no alternative to Prohibition.

Nevertheless Prohibition was voted down in Illinois in 1855. But as stated before, there was some salvage from the defeat. First of all there was the acquaintanceship and cooperation of Major Merwin and President Lincoln until the latter's death. And again, there was Mr. Lincoln's education in fundamental principles, the understanding of the limitations of sovereign governments; as stated by Blackstone—Law "is a rule of civil conduct prescribed by the supreme power of a state commanding what is *right* and prohibiting what is *wrong*." And this education was completed just at the right time and in the providence of God was put to use on another great question.

The Missouri Compromise of 1820 defining the limit of slave territory to be south of Mason and Dixon's line shushed that troublesome question for almost thirty years. Then came the acquisition of vast new territories as a result of the war with Mexico and the settlement of the Northwest Boundary dispute, and the slavery question

flamed anew over whether this new territory should be slave or free. This was quelled once more by certain compromises adopted in 1850 which made most of the new territory free. But in 1854, Stephen A. Douglas disrupted the apparent calm once and for all by securing the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill which stipulated that each territory or state should decide the slavery question for itself, thereby annulling the Missouri Compromise and throwing all new territory open to slavery if the inhabitants so desired.

The Pro-slavery forces were again victorious in the Dred Scott Decision of the United States Supreme Court in 1857, in which Chief Justice Taney, speaking for the majority, virtually declared that slaves were just property and like other chattels, could be transported to any part of the country without depriving their masters of the rights of ownership, and that the negro has "no rights which the white man is bound to respect." These victories for slavery brought Lincoln out of his retirement from politics outraged, brought the Republican party into existence, and led Lincoln to enter the senatorial race in Illinois against Douglas in 1858. By an arrangement which must have surprised even themselves and is still one of the seven political wonders, they agreed to meet each other in a series of public debates in seven of the main cities of the state. The best explanation of the miracle is that each felt that he had what it would take to show up his opponent, even to the point of ig-

nominy. Douglas, the "Little Giant," less than five feet of "compressed power," was confident in his suave manners, eloquent oratory, and brilliant mind that had won him a meteoric rise to eminence, so that already in 1852 and 1856 he had been considered as Presidential timber by the Democratic party, and he was more than hopeful that the third time would prove to be the charm. He already possessed "charm." Besides Lincoln had invited defeat by saying in his speech of acceptance, "A house divided against itself cannot stand. This nation cannot endure half slave and half free," a remark which even his Republican friends termed "a d—— fool utterance." Surely, this Lincoln would be an easy antagonist!

Lincoln, the "Big Giant," six feet, four inches of concentrated awkwardness, not too well dressed, nor a natural orator, was no less confident in a righteous cause, and that right must eventually win. As he said on another occasion: "Let us have faith to believe that right makes might, and in that faith, let us dare to do our duty as we understand it." He was confident in his weapon of honest conviction. He was confident that he could put the evasive Douglas into such a position that he could no longer carry water on both shoulders, but must spill one vessel or the other and perhaps both; he would make him say the things that would either offend the anti-slavery Democrats of the North or the slave holding Democrats of the South, and though Douglas might win the Senatorship in 1858, he certainly could not win the Presidency in 1860. Lincoln

said, "The battle of 1860 is worth a hundred of this." It was perfect political strategy, it divided the Democratic party so that they had two candidates in 1860, and made the election of Lincoln possible though with a little less than half the total vote.

But it was not a personal victory over Douglas that Lincoln desired; he wanted to defeat the things for which Douglas stood and the principle, if principle it could be called, by which he lived. More important than showing the conflict of opinion between Douglas and the Democrats of the North, on the one hand, or the Democrats of the South, on the other, was the exposure of Douglas' conflict with the Eternal Right, his conflict with God Himself, his lack of moral convictions. During their debates Lincoln said:

He has read from my speech in Springfield in which I say that "a house divided against itself cannot stand." Does the Judge say that it can stand? I do not understand whether he does or not. The Judge does not seem to be attending to me just now, but I would like to know if it is his opinion that a house divided against itself can stand. If he thinks that a house divided against itself can stand then it is a question of veracity, not between the Judge and myself, but between the Judge and an authority of a somewhat higher character.

In an unguarded moment Douglas said, "I care not whether slavery be voted up or voted down," and this aroused Lincoln's righteous wrath that anyone could be so indifferent to the wrongs inflicted on the slave. What a target such an utterance offered for Lincoln's well-aimed shafts! He stigmatized it as the "care not whether slavery

be voted up or voted down" doctrine, and held up to public view the man who had ceased to care about the things about which most people do care. "Slavery is not to be treated as 'only equal to the cranberry laws of Indiana.'" Slaves are not "on a par with onions and potatoes." Slavery might look small to Douglas but to the great body of American people it was a "vast moral, social, and political wrong."

Let us listen in on Mr. Douglas discussing the right and wrong of this momentous question :

Now I hold that Illinois has a right to abolish slavery, as she did, and I hold that Kentucky has the same right to continue slavery and protect it that Illinois has to abolish it. I hold that New York has as much right to abolish slavery as Virginia has to protect it, and that each and every state of this Union is a sovereign power, with the right to do as it pleases with the question of slavery, and with all its domestic institutions. Slavery is not the only question which comes up in this controversy. A far more important one to you is, what shall be done with the free negro. We have settled the slavery question in Illinois so far as we are concerned, we have prohibited it in Illinois forever, and in doing so I think that we have done wisely, and there is no man in the state who would be more strenuous in his opposition to the introduction of slavery into the state than I would; but when we settled it for ourselves we exhausted all our power over that subject. We have done our whole duty, and can do no more. We must leave each and every other state to decide the same question for itself.

Now listen in on Mr. Lincoln's reply :

Judge Douglas contends that whatever community wants slaves has a right to have them; and so they have, if slavery is right, but if slavery is wrong they can have no right to do wrong. He says that slaves like other



property may be carried into new territory, and that is true if slavery is right, but if slavery is wrong there can be no such right. There can be no comparison between right and wrong. That is the issue that shall continue in this country when these poor tongues of ours shall be silent. It is the eternal struggle between the two principles of right and wrong in the world. One is the common right of humanity and the other is the divine right of kings. It is the same spirit that says: "you work and toil and earn bread and I will eat it." It is a false philosophy—it is a false statesmanship—that undertakes to build up a system of policy upon the basis of caring nothing about the very thing that everybody cares most about "

In fairness to truth let it be said that the debate was no "push-over" for Mr. Lincoln. He received more votes than did his opponent, but owing to the division of districts, Douglas won the senatorial seat. Douglas ranked in the class with Webster, Clay, and Calhoun, though not strictly contemporary with them, and he magnanimously or flatteringly remarked after the debates that during his sixteen years in Congress he had not met so strong an antagonist. On another occasion he declared Lincoln to be without a peer in his knowledge of the fundamental principle of government: "You understand these questions better than does any other man in the nation." When Lincoln became President, Douglas gave him his hearty support until his regretted death in June, 1861. His magnanimity was shown by relieving the President in the embarrassing situation of not knowing how to dispose of his high silk hat when about to begin his inaugural address, but Mr. Douglas reached for it and held it

during the ceremony.

But, returning to our story—when the formal Lincoln-Douglas debates were over, a sort of quasi-debate went on, for Douglas went to Ohio to speak and Lincoln was invited to follow him and did. He was invited to Kansas, to Cooper Institute in New York City, to Massachusetts, and

And everywhere that Douglas went  
Lincoln was sure to go.

Well, not exactly, but everywhere that Lincoln went he proclaimed with no uncertain sound that “slavery is wrong,” and those words reverberated until they brought on an earthquake.

Let us trace the growth of that conviction in Lincoln’s mind. In a letter to A. G. Hodges, April 4, 1864, the opening sentences show us the seed, the blade, the ear, and the full corn, though not in that order: “I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think and so feel. . .” The sight of the New Orleans slave market and the shackled slaves on the Ohio river steamboats intensified the conviction. In 1837, this twenty-eight year old member of the Illinois Assembly, with Dan Stone protested against some pro-slavery resolutions, and declared “that the institution of slavery is founded on injustice and bad policy,” “the first formal declaration,” in the opinion of W. E. Curtis “against the system of slavery that was ever made in any legislative body in the United States, at least west of the Hudson River.”

Lincoln may be said to have been one of the

charter members of the Republican party and at their first State Convention in Bloomington, Illinois, May 29, 1856, among other things he said:

The battle of freedom is to be fought out on principle. Slavery is a violation of the eternal right. We have temporized with it from the necessities of our condition; but as sure as God reigns and school children read, **THAT BLACK FOUL LIE CAN NEVER BE CONSECRATED INTO GOD'S HALLOWED TRUTH!**

Can we as Christian men, and strong and free ourselves, wield the sledge or hold the iron which is to manacle anew an already oppressed race? "Woe unto them," it is written, "that decree unrighteous decrees and that write grievousness which they have prescribed."

Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not themselves, and, under the rule of a just God, cannot long retain it.

Was it he who wrote into the Republican platform of 1860 the following: "We deny the authority of Congress, of a Territorial legislature or of any individual to give legal existence to slavery in any Territory of the United States."

In one of his Kansas speeches he said:

We want and must have a national policy as to slavery which deals with it as being a wrong. Whoever would prevent slavery becoming national and perpetual yields all when he yields to a policy which treats it either as being right, or as being a matter of indifference.

In the Cooper Institute speech, he said:

If slavery is right, all words, acts, laws, and constitutions against it are themselves wrong, and should be silenced and swept away. If it is right, we cannot justly object to its nationality—its universality. If it is wrong, they cannot justly insist upon its extension—its enlargement. All they ask we could readily grant, if we thought slavery right; all we ask they as readily grant,

if they thought it wrong. Their thinking it right, and our thinking it wrong, is the precise fact upon which depends the whole controversy. . . . Wrong as we think slavery is, we can yet afford to let it alone where it is, because that much is due to the necessity arising from its actual presence in the nation; but can we, while our votes will prevent it, allow it to spread into the national Territories, and to overrun us here in the free States? If our sense of duty forbids this, then let us stand by our duty fearlessly and effectively. Let us be diverted by none of those sophistical contrivances wherewith we are so industriously plied and belabored, contrivances such as groping for some middle ground between the right and the wrong, vain as the search for a man who should be neither a living man nor a dead man; such as a policy of "don't care," on a question about which all true men do care; such as Union appeals beseeching true Union men to yield to disunionists; reversing the divine rule, and calling, not the sinners, but the righteous to repentance; such as invocations to Washington, imploring men to unsay what Washington said, and undo what Washington did. Neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the government nor of dungeons to ourselves. Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it.



Memories

Painting by Harry Roseland

Courtesy of Gerlach-Barklow Co.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE REAL LINCOLN

John the Evangelist had a happy way of taking the microphone down among the crowd, as it were, and of letting us listen to the murmurings and disputing going on in the streets concerning Jesus. Almost the entire action in the story of the man born blind is carried forward in this way. "The neighbors said, 'Is not this he that sat and begged?' Some said, 'This is he:' others said, 'He is like him:' but he said, 'I am he.'" The bickering goes on until they bring him before the Pharisees where again there was a division. Some of them said, "This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day." Others said, "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" Then the parents are dragged into the melee, but enter a *habeas corpus, nolle contendere* plea, leaving the burden of proof on the physically mature but inexperienced son, who at least has good sense enough to stick to his facts: "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." Thus the dispute goes on for days and perhaps weeks, until there was a division among the Jews; for many of them said of Jesus, "He hath a devil and is mad; why hear ye him?" Others said, "These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?"

We wonder if the disciples, as they listened to

these debates, sometimes found themselves swaying between two opinions. Could this vast doubting, scholarly majority, comprising all the rulers of the Jews, be wrong—altogether wrong?

But why this digression? The writer has just read *The Real Lincoln* by Charles Landon Carter Minor who was a Virginia schoolman at the outbreak of the Civil War who rose from being a private to a captaincy in the Confederate Army. He continued teaching in various schools of the South after the war. He wrote for Southern papers, principally on matters pertaining to the War. Dr. Minor received his degree of LL.D. from William and Mary College in 1874. He is described as a devout Christian, a loyal churchman, for many years a vestryman and sometimes a delegate to the Councils of the diocese.

Although Dr. Minor writes under the title "The Real Lincoln" he concedes in his preface that his work—mostly quotations—"gives only the bad side of Lincoln, and not the good" but he does this because his excellencies have been elaborated by others, and to recount what is already so familiar, and to give "his excellencies" "any adequate statement would require a space like the ten very large volumes in which Nicolay and Hay have done their work so ably and with such jealous protection of their hero's good name." The rest of his small volume takes the *adverse* parts of the *adversative* sentences of the histories, biographies, and newspapers, and by patching together this mosaic, gives us a picture of "the real Lincoln." This "real Lin-

coln" was a cowardly, cruel military despot (for he not only had his own blemishes, but all the vices of the several members of his Cabinet—Seward, Stanton, Cameron, Chase and all the others, to account for) who, contrary to the wishes of everybody—well, almost everybody, everybody that was anybody—with a mutinous, deserting, drafted army, co-erced the South to remain in the Union that should have been divided, and freed a singing, laughing, radiant race whose condition was happier than that of the Northern wage earner, only to set them free to poverty and oppression, a freedom they were reluctant to accept.

But what interests us here is that "the real Lincoln" was a hypocritical, scoffing skeptic who once (at the age of twenty-three) wrote a "little book" against the Bible and the Divinity of Christ which Hill burned, etc., etc., from which views he never changed, but when he "entered political life he became reticent upon his religious opinions" (Rhodes). He quotes Lamon: Mr. Lincoln "appreciated . . . . the violence and extent of the religious prejudices which freedom of discussion from his standpoint would be sure to rouse against him" and "the immense and augmenting power of the churches" . . . "he indulged freely in indefinite expressions about 'Divine Providence,' 'the justice of God,' 'the favor of the Most High' in his published documents, but he nowhere ever professed the slightest faith in Jesus as the Son of God and the Saviour of men." "He never told any one that he accepted



Jesus as the Christ, or performed one of the acts which necessarily followed upon such a conviction." "When he went to church at all, he went to mock, and came away to mimic." (Those words "nowhere," "never," "any one" are big words, Mr. Lamon, and mightily inclusive. They savor of Eternity.)

While Dr. Minor quotes from a number of sources on this point, and even deftly refers to the single sentence quoted by Lamon from Mrs. Lincoln, his sources strangely converge toward Mr. Herndon from whom Lamon purchased his materials and who has been accused of skillfully quoting, unquoting and misquoting to lead the reader to previously prepared conclusions. Nevertheless we owe a debt to all these men whether confessed foes or professed friends of Abraham Lincoln for taking the microphone to every street corner that we might gather all shades of public and private opinion concerning him. It helps us to know that he was human, perhaps all too human.

It is a stupendously more difficult task to prove that a man was a Christian, than to demonstrate that he was not. So high is the Christian standard that a single sentence from one's lips or pen, a single act, even where these may have been misunderstood or misinterpreted, is sufficient evidence for the general public to reach the verdict, "Thou art weighed and found wanting." But to prove that one is a Christian requires a considerable period of time of unblemished speech and behavior, terminated by death itself, so that

only in his epitaph is there general consent to write: "Here was a Christian." Perhaps Lincoln began too late.

Was Lincoln such an expert actor that he deceived such intimate friends as the Honorable Isaac N. Arnold, Congressman from Illinois who said: "No more reverent Christian than he ever sat in the executive chair, not excepting Washington. . . . When the unbeliever shall convince the people that this man, whose life was straightforward, clear, and honest, was a sham and a hypocrite, then, but not before, may he make the world doubt his Christianity." Was it of the church folks Lincoln was thinking when he said, "You can fool some of the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time," (but calling to mind the worldly-wise men, he added) you can not fool all the people all the time."

It would be interesting to know just how many church delegations visited the President during his administration. There were many, and they seem always to have had a respectful hearing. In May 1864, in a letter of reply to a deputation of ministers who presented resolutions adopted by the Methodist General Conference, he said:

It may fairly be said that the Methodist Episcopal Church, not less devoted than the rest, is, by its greater numbers, the most important of all. It is no fault in others that the Methodist Church sends more soldiers to the field, more nurses to the hospitals, and more prayers to Heaven, than any other. God bless the Methodist Church! Bless all the churches, and blessed be God, who in this our great trial giveth us the churches.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nicolay and Hay, Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln: Speeches, Letters, and State Papers.

But was it merely to gain the favor of church people that Lincoln issued his "Sunday Rest Order?" Or was it, as he said on another occasion, an earnest concern to be on the Lord's side, a move to gain victory by being worthy of victory? In the order itself, he specifies both motives and we believe he was sincere. It certainly did not meet with unanimous approval among army officers. The order follows:

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 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 the country."<sup>2</sup>

So far did he insist that military and naval engagements be avoided on the Sabbath, and on attendance at divine worship, that he was accused

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

of being superstitious. General McDowell enjoyed telling of the quiet rebuke he received. "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.' A shadow clouded Lincoln's thoughtful face. 'McDowell, get a good ready and start Monday.'"

Contrast with this the pressure put on our industries in late 1940 by William S. Knudson, co-director of production to eliminate "the long week-end industrial idleness, as a measure of speeding defense." By the middle of February 1941 he was rejoicing that "our industrial black-out from Friday to Monday is disappearing in the United States." On Sabbath morning, December 7, 1941 the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and found us unprepared. Was there any connection?

*"... tell me, he that knows,  
... why such daily cast of brazen cannon,  
And foreign mart for implements of war;  
Why such impress of shipwrights, whose sore task  
Does not divide the Sunday from the week;  
What might be toward, that this sweaty haste  
Doth make the night joint-labourer with the day;  
Who is 't that can inform me?"*

When World War II is ended will there be a spiritual week end "black-out" more disastrous than Pearl Harbor?

## CHAPTER XXII

### HIS CHURCH RELATIONS

It is unanimously agreed that Abraham Lincoln was never enrolled in any church. Just what was his attitude toward the Church in general, and its several denominations in particular, we will now attempt to discover.

He was never baptised, for his parents were Baptists and they do not baptise infants. Honorable Thomas B. McGregor, at one time Assistant Attorney-general of Kentucky, tells us that Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks were united in marriage by a Methodist minister, Jesse Head, and shortly afterward united with a church of the Baptized Licking Locust Association of Regular Baptists in Kentucky. Later they moved to Indiana, but although the Pigeon Creek Baptist Church had been organized since June 8, 1816, Thomas Lincoln did not transfer his letter until June 7, 1823 (Saturday) and at that time his wife, Sarah Bush Johnston Lincoln was received "by Experance"—this from the minutes of this church. She and Thomas Carter were immersed the next day in Pigeon Creek. Abraham Lincoln's sister Sarah, two years older than he, later became a member of this church. Another minute entered in 1828 gives a list of contributors for building another chimney for the meetinghouse from which we quote:

Thomas Lincoln

White Corn

Manufactured—pounds—24 (unquote)

Evidently there were private stills in those days too.

Thomas Lincoln was of sufficient importance in this church to be chosen moderator of Referees in a difference between Sister Grigsby and Sister Crafford on March 20, 1830. Though the Lincolns removed to Illinois about that time, and moved frequently thereafter, their church letters never followed them. We are led to hope that he finished his course keeping the faith by the following letter from his son Abraham, dated January 12, 1851:<sup>1</sup>

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 on our heads, and He will not forget the dying man who puts 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.<sup>2</sup>

Just how much of Lincoln's early life was spent in church is hard to discover from "the short and simple annals of the poor." There is sufficient evidence that he was not bored by church services. When a child of five, he would mount a stool or

<sup>1</sup>National Republican, Washington, D. C., October 15, 1921.

<sup>2</sup>Nicolay and Hay, Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln: Speeches, Letters, and State Papers.

block of wood and preach to the other children or to the family circle, shouting and pounding the Bible, just like every other church trained child.

From the time the family moved into Illinois until Lincoln became a member of the State Legislature in Vandalia, the capitol in 1834, the communities in which he lived seem to have had the unhappy distinction of having no churches. There are plenty of assertions, perhaps not altogether without foundation, that he read and followed such skeptics as Voltaire and Tom Paine, and even wrote an essay against Christianity which was discussed in a former chapter. Those who are strongest in this opinion—Herndon, Lamon, and Weik, all getting their information through Herndon—also maintain that he remained a skeptic as long as he lived. These three men who produced two biographies among them, exhibit a strange complex, both in their private correspondence with one another, now published, and in their books, the result of their correspondence. They make Lincoln out to be a great man—else why write his biography?—but great in their own image, as previously noted. Herndon fairly adored Lincoln as well he might. He was “Honest Abe” to the *nth* degree, incapable of duplicity, insincerity, deception of any kind whatsoever, incapable of winning a lawsuit when he discovered himself to be on the wrong side, but on another page, this wily politician (Lincoln), realizing the powerful influence of the churches, plays a sharp trick on the poor simple religious folk by pretending to be converted—there is nothing dishonest

in deceiving the blind or the gullible, we may suppose. Well at least these biographers inadvertently admit that he did change his habits and so affiliated himself with the church people that Lamon says "his New Salem associates and the aggressive deists with whom he originally united at Springfield gradually dispersed and fell away from his side." Repelled, we may suppose, by the similarity of their beliefs?

Herndon's correspondence discloses also that he hopes to discover something about Lincoln that will astound the public, and that his book will create a sensation. He hits upon an idea.—Lincoln has long, silent, melancholy spells. He must be brooding over some awful secret that even the omniscient Herndon hasn't learned. But he will ferret it out. Aha! he has it! Lincoln has learned that he was born an illegitimate child, and the pall of it is hanging over him. No, there is absolutely no proof, but he will find some. He searches for the record of the marriage of Tom Lincoln and Nancy Hanks—and lo, he doesn't find it. That's damaging! Nancy Hanks was a frolicsome girl. That's bad! Sarah Bush Johnston had children by her first husband but none by Thomas Lincoln: therefore all Nancy Hanks' three children were illegitimate. This and much more. How conclusive! Well, Herndon had a good nose for bad smells, and he followed every scent. And the results were all negative. Even Herndon was finally convinced he was wrong. But in the meantime, he had become financially embarrassed and sold his material to Lamon, and Lamon took



the storm of public disapproval. He sold just enough copies of his book to open the seal on the vial of public wrath, and the unsold copies broke him. He deserved it all.

But Herndon still had the other story—Lincoln was a sceptic. Lamon's story was published in 1872; Herndon's in 1889. Perhaps it was the growing appreciation of Lincoln that caused the far greater tempest to descend on Herndon's head.

Was this charge of unbelief against Mr. Lincoln entirely without foundation? It must have had some basis at some time in his life, else why should the challenge have been put to Mr. Lincoln in one of his political campaigns, as disclosed in the letter of Thomas Mostiller of Menard County, Illinois to B. F. Irwin of Pleasant Plains, Illinois, dated April 28, 1874:

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 1844 or '47, 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 made no pretensions of religion himself.<sup>3</sup>

Let us look for a little while at the other side of the shield. In 1837, on the way home from a camp meeting at "Salem Church" six miles from Springfield where the Rev. Peter Akers, D.D. had discoursed on certain prophecies and predicted "the downfall of castes and the end of tyrannies

<sup>3</sup>Illinois State Journal, May 15, 1874.

and the crushing out of slavery” Lincoln 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 unto 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.”<sup>4</sup>

When Lincoln first went to Springfield in 1837, he attended the Methodist Church, but after his marriage he went with Mrs. Lincoln to the First Presbyterian Church, later to the Episcopal Church, and finally returned to the First Presbyterian Church as related in a previous chapter. Bishop C. H. Fowler, in his lecture on Abraham Lincoln, includes this story as told by the Rev. James F. Jacquess, D.D. who was pastor of the Springfield Station M.E. Church, later called the First M. E. Church. No date is given, though William J. Johnstone suggests 1849 as the most probable. There is no reason to doubt the story, except that the Rev. Jacquess seems to have been much more confident of Mr. Lincoln’s conversion than was Lincoln himself.

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

<sup>4</sup>Ida M. Tarbell, *Life of Lincoln*, Vol. II, p. 31.

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.<sup>5</sup>

It is hoped that the reader will review the former chapters which give the account of Mr. Lincoln's connection with the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield.

Yet for all Mr. Lincoln's increased interest and attendance at church services, and his sacrificial efforts on behalf of checking the growth of slavery, he seems to have lacked the support of the churches of his home town. In late October, 1860, he stopped in the office of Hon. Newton Bateman, State Superintendent of Public Instruction for Illinois for a quiet talk. A canvass of the city had been made, and Mr. Lincoln was interested in how church people were going to vote. These men went over the books together. They found that twenty out of twenty-three ministers and a large majority of the more prominent church members were planning to vote against Lincoln for President. Drawing a New Testament from his pocket, Lincoln said something like this:

I am not a Christian—God knows I would be one—but I have carefully read the Bible, and I do not so under-

<sup>5</sup>Christian Advocate, November 11, 1909.

stand this book. 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 doesn’t care whether slavery is voted up or 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 right. Doesn’t it appear strange that men can ignore the moral aspect 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 is 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.

Mr. Bateman adds: “Everything he said was of a peculiarly deep, tender, and religious tone, and all was tinged with a touching melancholy . . . after further reference to a belief in the Divine Providence, and the fact of God in history, the conversation turned upon prayer. He freely stated his belief in the duty, privilege, and efficacy of prayer, and intimated in no unmistakable terms that he had sought in that way the divine guidance and favor.” As they were about to separate, Mr. Bateman remarked: “I have not sup-

posed that you were accustomed to think so much upon this class of subjects. Certainly your friends generally are ignorant of the sentiments you have expressed to me." Lincoln replied quickly, "I know they are; but I think more on these subjects than upon all others, and I have done so for years; and I am willing that *you* should know it."<sup>6</sup>

This summarizes Mr. Lincoln's relation to the churches up until his departure for the White House.

That first month in Washington must have been a busy one for the Lincolns, what with the inauguration, the forming of the Cabinet, the message to Congress, the swarms of office seekers, and most important of all, formulating plans for dealing with those states in open rebellion. Yet the President had time to consult with a member of his Cabinet about the choice of a church, or rather of a minister, for he said, "I wish to find a church whose clergyman does not preach politics." The choice fell to Dr. Phineas D. Gurley, pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church. A deacon of this church relates: "I remember taking a plat of the church over to the White House for inspection. Mrs. Lincoln looked it over and selected the pew, which, strangely enough, happened to be the one Mr. Buchanan had just vacated. The annual rental of the pew at the time was fifty dollars a year." The record book shows that the rental was promptly paid each quarter from March 1861 until the assassination of the President.

<sup>6</sup>J. G. Holland, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 237.

“The pew remains, with what God gave him there,  
And all the world through him,  
So let it be—  
One of the people’s shrines.”  
—Lyman Whitney Allen.

That pew was occupied with increasing regularity. John Hay, assistant private secretary of the President, or some member of the Cabinet, often occupied it with the Lincolns. Even had Lincoln been but a private citizen his presence would have been conspicuous, for he needed the aisle seat in order to stretch his long legs, and during the prayers he stood, but probably not for the same reason. William Henry Roberts, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., wrote the *Foreward* to the book “Abraham Lincoln, the Christian” which is here quoted in full:

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 to the far more extended tributes to Mr. Lincoln as a Christian given in this work, reverently prepared by my colaborer in the Kingdom of God, the Rev. William J. Johnstone, D.D.

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.

After the Rev. W. J. Johnstone lectured on *Abraham Lincoln, the Christian* in that church on February 10, 1924, and had spoken of Mr. Lincoln's habit of always standing for prayer, a woman told him that her husband had often mentioned Mr. Lincoln's reverent habit and that his father was one of the men who stood with him.

President Lincoln's standing for prayer is more than just a fact: it indicates an attitude of mind. The above quotation from Mr. Roberts indicates that the Presbyterian Church in general and that congregation in particular was undergoing the

transition from the "immemorial usage in many Presbyterian congregations" of standing for all the prayers, to that lethargic and less reverent habit of sitting in the presence of the Most High. The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church was the oldest church in Washington and it was conservative. Leonora W. Wood, writing in *The Presbyterian* speaks of this church "whose history is contemporaneous with the life of the National Capital, and whose ministers, from its earliest years down to the present time (1940), have been of Scotch Covenanter stock, strict adherents to the tenets of Calvinism, and as orthodox as John Knox himself. . . ." And here was Mr. Lincoln, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Conservative among Conservatives, a Conservator of that good old custom of being courteous to God.

Mr. Lincoln must have felt that reverence manifested in that familiar story of Queen Victoria. Before the performance of Handel's Messiah, she had been carefully instructed by the concert master that when they reached the Hallelujah Chorus, the whole audience would rise, but that she should exercise her Royal prerogatives and remain seated. Did she do it? "King of kings! and Lord of lords!" How dare she sit still? The writer has seen the Mohammedan turn toward Mecca and fall prostrate on a rolling ship's deck at the hour of prayer. In the Roman Catholic Church they kneel to a mere image. But in the Protestant church we whisper and titter and loll, showing less courtesy toward God than we use with the beggar at our door. We are in danger of



becoming like the Todds. Mr. Lincoln was once asked how his wife's people spelled their name. "With two *d*'s. God uses only one in His, but the Todds need two."

And he attended mid-week prayer meeting! And not "because he hadn't nothin' else to do" but because he had. "Without the assistance of the Divine Being I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail." Dr. Gurley's study adjoining the lecture room is now called the "Lincoln Chapel" for it was arranged that the door should be left ajar, and here Lincoln came, with his secret service men, to listen to the pastor and elders leading the people in fervent prayer, prayers that transferred the burdens, and seemed to bring the end of the war nearer. One evening two young men—young men attended prayer meeting in those by-gone days—curious to discover who were the strangers that slipped so hurriedly out of the side door as the service closed, followed the tracks in the newly fallen snow to the White House. They told Dr. Gurley of their adventure, who straightly charged them to keep the secret: "The President is extremely anxious to avoid publicity." Not until after Lincoln's death did the congregation learn that the pastor's study had for months been the prayer room of the President.

Lincoln came to think of this church not only as essential to his own private life, but essential to the welfare of the nation. At a time when there was heavy fighting near Washington, public buildings were being commandeered for hos-

pitals for the wounded, New York Avenue church among them. On Sabbath morning the sidewalk was piled with lumber, and Dr. Gurley announced that this would be the last service by order of the military authorities. The President rose from his pew and said: "That order was issued without my authority. I rescind it. We need this church to keep the stars shining in the skies."

But a certain other church in Alexandria, Virginia, some six miles from Washington did not fare so well. The well dressed lady pleader for it urged that there were "only two or three wounded soldiers in it. I came to see if you would not let us have it, as we want it very much to worship God in. . . ."

"Madam, have you been to see the post-surgeon at Alexandria about this matter?"

"Yes, sir, but we could do nothing with him."

"Well, we put him there to attend to just such business, and it is reasonable to suppose that he knows better what should be done, under the circumstances, than I do. See here: you say you live in Alexandria; probably you own property there. How much will you give to assist in building a hospital?"

"You know, Mr. Lincoln, our property is very much embarrassed by the war; so, really I could hardly afford to give much for that purpose."

"Well, Madam, I expect we shall have another fight soon; and my candid opinion is, God wants that church for poor, wounded Union soldiers, as much as He does for Secesh people to worship in." Then turning abruptly to his desk—"You

will excuse me; I can do nothing for you. Good-day, Madam.”

We may suppose that Lincoln judged that the church that was upholding his morale upon whose shoulders weighed momentous eventualities was in a different classification from the one in which the people worshiped who were pressing those burdens more heavily upon him. And was he not right, that far? John Hay speaks of the great change that came over the President during the four years from 1861 to 1865, in body and spirit. “He bore the sorrows of the nation on his own heart; he suffered deeply, not only from disappointments, from treachery, from hope deferred, from the open assaults of enemies, and from the sincere anger of discontented friends, but from the world-wide distress and affliction which flowed from the great conflict in which he was engaged, and which he could not evade. . . . His eyes grew veiled by constant meditation on momentous subjects. He aged rapidly.” In that catalogue Mr. Hay omitted one of the heaviest sorrows of all—the loss of his loved son Willie.

Four years of intense heat in the furnace of affliction had burned until its intense flame had burned away the dross of personal ambition and self-sufficiency, and even of doubt and the humble servant of God became a willing disciple of Christ, ready to confess Him before men. When Lincoln, soon after coming to Washington, said to Congressman Henry C. Deming (he made similar remarks to Dr. Gurley) :

<sup>7</sup>D. D. Thompson, Abraham Lincoln, pp. 157, 158.

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 Savior'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 thy self," that church will I join with all my heart and all my soul.<sup>8</sup>

He may, unconsciously to himself perhaps, have been stalling. But when, very shortly before his death in answer to the question of an Illinois clergyman, "Do you love Jesus," he 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."<sup>9</sup> He was not stalling then.

Dr. Gurley, after reading Herndon's article in *Scribner's Monthly* (July 1873) in which he spoke of Lincoln's infidelity, said:

I do not believe a word of it. 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 teachings. And, more than that, in the latter days of his chastened and weary life, after the death of his son Willie, and his

<sup>8</sup>Memorial Address Before Connecticut Legislature, June 8, 1865, p. 42.

<sup>9</sup>O. H. Oldroyd, Lincoln Memorial Album, p. 366.

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.

Mrs. E. H. Adams, daughter of Dr. Gurley, though over eighty, was still a mentally alert and enthusiastic member of the New York Avenue Presbyterian church at last reports; she says: "My father had many discussions with Mr. Lincoln about uniting with the church, and had persuaded him that this is what he should do. The time had been set, which was only a few Sundays after his assassination."

The following quotation from Noah Brooks, bosom friend of Lincoln and newspaper correspondent confirms the above:

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. . . . 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 about the time of Willie's death. 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 personally connect him with the visible church on earth.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Scribner's Monthly, July 1873. Letter of Noah Brooks to the Rev. J. A. Reed.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### LINCOLN AND HIS BIBLE

If you have followed the story of Abraham Lincoln from his childhood until the day of his assassination, you have gotten many glimpses of the relation of his life to a quaint, old fashioned, but perennially new book, commonly known as *The Bible*. You have seen him and his sister Sarah (two years his senior) sitting at the mother's knee on Sabbath afternoons and listening intently to the stories of David and Goliath, Joseph and his brothers, Daniel in the lion's den, and a lot of other all-time thrillers. Later you have seen and heard this young boy with but a few months of education at his sick mother's bedside, repeating the memorized passages, or stumbling through some of the less familiar chapters, during her last sickness.

After that mother has been laid to rest, and a step-mother has taken her place in a tidier and better furnished home, we see the lad lying on his stomach reading by the light of a flickering fire through the long winter evenings from the few books of his providentially chosen library, Aesop's Fables, Robinson Crusoe, Life of Washington, Pilgrim's Progress, and most important of all, the Bible.

Then we see him wrestling with doubt, but honest doubt; not dismissing the mysteries of the Word that he cannot understand, nor casting

away all the possibilities of a spiritual life because he cannot dig to the tip of the tap-root of Cain's wife's family tree; but recognizing that one must answer either in this world or a future world the inescapable question, "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?" he wrestles on until he is satisfied that the Bible is the unerring word of God Himself.

Again we have seen him as a lawyer by the bedside of a dying woman, after writing her will, with the Bible in his hands, but instead of reading it to her as she requested, he recited numerous comforting passages.

Now we are listening to him debating with Douglas, and against the advice of all his friends, challenging the whole compromising nation,—  
"A house divided against itself cannot stand . . ."

Yet, Herndon says that he never became a believer in the Bible, and that he seldom read it. Herndon also says he was "secretive." Yet Herndon, so far as the writer has read him, quotes not a single sentence to prove that Lincoln was an unbeliever, but constantly harks back to the treatise Lincoln is supposed to have written in his twenties favoring infidelity, the treatise that Hill snatched from him and burned, thus destroying the evidence for both sides. Lincoln must have been "secretive," especially so with Herndon, or Herndon could have quoted him. But certainly Lincoln made no secret of his faith in the Bible in his public utterances, or in his private letters of which a few may be quoted. Didn't our Lord repeatedly suggest that a measure of "secretiveness" in our

relations with God was better than too much ostentation about it on the street corners and market places? And since that time, haven't we all been a little inclined (too much so at times) to be "secretive" in confessing our faith in the Bible?

Now as for his reading the Bible but seldom and too little, could not the same be said of practically all Christians? At least, it might look that way to an outsider. We who insist that the Bible never grows old, often give far more time to the newspapers that will be old and unreadably stale as soon as the next edition is rushed from the press to the street by a thousand shouting newsboys. Those who spend an hour a day with their Bibles, and they are rather rare, only spend 4 per cent of their time with it, 15 minutes a day is approximately 1 per cent, and what shall we say of those who average much less? and their name is Legion.

Yet such figures are hardly fair to the facts, for he who spends but 1 per cent of his time (fifteen minutes) with his Bible, may be spending the rest of his time putting it into practice. Many of those who claim to be lovers of Shakespeare or Browning, for instance, may never have read the complete works of their preferred author, but records of those who have read the Bible through as many as one hundred times are not unknown. And the Bible penetrates, sharper than a two edged sword, and permeates body and mind. Certainly evidence is not lacking to show that Abraham Lincoln averaged well both in his love for



reading the Bible and of putting it into his life. Here are a few of the exhibits given in evidence:

In 1841, after returning from a visit to the home of the Speeds in Kentucky, he wrote to Miss Mary. After speaking of the cheerfulness of the slaves chained together on the steamboat, of which he says, "How true it is that 'God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb' or in other words, that He renders the worst of human conditions tolerable, while He permits the best to be nothing better than tolerable. . . . Tell your mother that I have not got her 'present' (an Oxford Bible) with me, but I intend to read it regularly when I return home. I doubt not that it is really, as she says, the best cure for the blues, could one but take it according to the truth."<sup>1</sup> Lincoln was subject to frequent, not to say chronic attacks of the "blues," and on some of these occasions at least, he resorted to the Bible and found it an effective cure.

This gift from Mother Speed may or may not have helped in bringing Lincoln out of his period of doubt, but it seems that her own son did not so quickly recover from a like misfortune. Joshua Speed was a long time friend of Lincoln's, a friendship which began early and continued until Lincoln's death. On invitation he visited the Lincoln family while they were staying at the Soldiers' Home in 1864. His opening remark on finding Lincoln sitting by the window reading his Bible, was, "I am glad to see you so profitably engaged."

<sup>1</sup>Complete Works of Lincoln, Vol. I, p. 180.

“Yes, I am profitably engaged.”

“Well,” said Speed, “if you have recovered from your scepticism, I am sorry to say that I have not.”<sup>2</sup>

Lincoln put his hand on Speed’s shoulder and looking earnestly at him said, “Speed, you are wrong. Take all of this book upon reason that you can, and the balance on faith, and you will live and die a happier man.” It was not long after this that Speed became a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

This was not the only time that Lincoln was seen reading his Bible. Mrs. Pomeroy, a nurse, who stayed at the White House during Willie’s sickness, says: “It was his custom when waiting for lunch to take his mother’s old worn out Bible and lie on the lounge and read, and one day he asked me what book I liked to read best, and I said, ‘I am fond of the Psalms.’ ‘Yes,’ he said to me, ‘they are the best, for I find in them something for every day of the week.’”<sup>3</sup>

Captain Mix, a commander of Lincoln’s body-guard, frequently ate breakfast with the Lincolns. He says: “Many times have I listened to our most eloquent preachers, but never with the same feeling of awe and reverence as when our Christian President, his arm around his son, with his deep earnest tone, each morning, read a chapter from the Bible.”<sup>4</sup>

This incident as related by a Mr. Jay occurred in 1862. After the Battle of the Hudson with the

<sup>2</sup>Henry C. Whitney, *Lincoln, the Citizen*, 1908, p. 201.

<sup>3</sup>*Lincoln Scrapbook*, Library of Congress, p. 80.

<sup>4</sup>Carpenter, *Six Months in the White House*, p. 261.

ill-fated Merrimac, a governmental party was traveling by steamer from Fortress Monroe to Norfolk. Lincoln was missed from the excited and noisy crowd, but was finally discovered in a quiet nook, reading his well-worn Testament.<sup>5</sup>

And here is the testimony of other White House attaches:

Professor Alexander Williamson, tutor to the President's boys:

"Mr. Lincoln very frequently studied the Bible with the aid of a Cruden's Concordance, which lay on his table."<sup>6</sup>

John G. Nicolay, the President's private secretary:

"He praised the simplicity of the Gospels. He often declared that the Sermon on the Mount contained the essence of all law and justice, and that the Lord's Prayer was the sublimest composition in the human language."<sup>7</sup>

Noah Brooks, newspaper correspondent, and bosom friend of the President from 1862 until his death, also his biographer, says:

"He could repeat from memory whole chapters of Isaiah, the New Testament, and the Psalms."<sup>8</sup>

Mention should here be made of Lincoln's lecture on "Discoveries and Inventions" which were prepared in 1859. Much of his material relating to the earliest record of various inventions and discoveries, was taken from the Bible. In this lecture Mr. Lincoln assumes that the Pentateuch was written by Moses and that the events related

<sup>5</sup>Carpenter (in Raymond), p. 734.

<sup>6</sup>S. Travena Jackson, *Lincoln's Use of the Bible*, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup>William Curtis, *The True Abraham Lincoln*, p. 387.

<sup>8</sup>Harper's Magazine, 1865, Vol. xxxi, p. 226, Noah Brooks.

there are scientific facts. Among other statements he says, "Before the Fall, man was put into the Garden of Eden to dress and keep it. His (man's) first important discovery was the fact that he was naked, and his first invention was the fig leaf apron. At the first interview of the Almighty with Adam and Eve, after the Fall, He made coats of skins and clothed them. The Bible makes no allusion to clothing before the Fall. Soon after the Deluge, Noah's two sons covered him with a garment, but of what material the garment was made, is not mentioned."

"Abraham mentions 'thread' in such connection as to indicate that spinning and weaving were in use in his day (Genesis XIV, 23), and soon after reference to the art is frequently made.

"The oldest recorded allusion to the wheel and axle is the mention of a 'chariot' (Genesis XI, 43). This was in Egypt, upon the occasion of Joseph being made Governor by Pharaoh. It was about twenty-five hundred years after the creation of Adam."

These are just a few examples of many that he cited from the Bible. From this manuscript we gather that Lincoln believed in the antiquity of the Scriptural record, Bible chronology, Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, Creation of Man, Transgression and the Fall, Penalty for Man's sins, the fig-leaf apron and the divinely provided garments of animal skins, the Deluge, Building of the Ark, Noah's intoxication, Abraham's offering of Isaac, the story of Joseph, bondage in Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, etc.

President Theodore Roosevelt addressing the American Bible Society in 1901 said: "Lincoln, sad, patient, kindly Lincoln, who, after bearing upon his shoulders for four years a greater burden than that borne by any other man of the Nineteenth century, laid down his life for the people whom, living, he had served so well, built up his entire reading upon his study of the Bible. He had mastered it absolutely, mastered it as later he mastered only one or two other books, notably Shakespeare, mastered it so that he became almost a man of one book who knew that book, and who instinctively put into practice what he had been taught therein; and he left his life as part of the crowning work of the century just closed."<sup>9</sup>

The following incident related by Thomas F. Pendleton who was for many years a doorkeeper at the White House, shows the force of this remark.

One day a man with a very swarthy complexion came in, wearing a silk hat and a Prince Albert coat. You would have taken him at first glance for a minister of the gospel. He commenced finding fault with Mr. Stanton, accusing him of not carrying out the order that President Lincoln had given two weeks before to have a certain man liberated from prison who had been sentenced to death but was pardoned.

Mr. Lincoln listened patiently to his complaint and then said emphatically: "If it had not been for me that man would now be in his grave. Now, sir, you claim to be a philanthropist. If you will get your Bible and turn to the 30th chapter of Proverbs, the tenth verse, you will read these words: 'Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest

<sup>9</sup>Lincoln's Use of the Bible, p. 10.

he curse thee and thou be found guilty.'” Whereupon the man got huffy and went away. But as he went out he said angrily, “There is no such passage in the Bible.” “Oh yes,” said Mr. Lincoln, “I think you will find it in the 30th chapter of Proverbs and at the tenth verse.”

This was late in the afternoon and I thought no more of the occurrence. Next morning I was at Mr. Lincoln’s office door as usual at eight o’clock and heard some one calling out, “Oh, Pendleton, I say, Pendleton, come in here.” When I went inside Mr. Lincoln said to me: “Wait a minute.” He stepped quickly into the private part of the house and soon reappeared with his Bible in his hand. He then sat down and read to me that identical passage he had quoted to the philanthropist, and sure enough it was found to be in the 30th chapter of Proverbs and at the tenth verse.

In those days I was not much of a Bible reader, but in 1865, I decided that all-important question whether or not I should be a follower of the Lord Jesus. I commenced reading a little old Bible that I had bought at the second-hand store. . . . One day I came across that same passage which Mr. Lincoln had quoted to the angry philanthropist. The whole occurrence came back to me and I thought what a just man was the President. He was not even willing for me to be in doubt as to his correct quotation of a Bible passage but must needs take his precious time to prove himself right in my eyes.<sup>10</sup>

But let Lincoln speak for himself. On September 7, 1864 a deputation of colored people from Baltimore presented this one whom colored people had come to all but worship, with a Bible. In accepting it, Lincoln said:

*“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*

<sup>10</sup>Thirty-six Years in the White House, pp. 25, 26.

*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 the very elegant copy of the great Book of God which you present."*<sup>11</sup>

Once in discussing with Mr. Lincoln his extreme optimism concerning the outcome of the war, Mr. L. E. Chittenden, who was then register of the treasury 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?" Mr. Lincoln's reply was: "No, there is the element of personal experience. If it did (depend on the Bible), the character of the Bible is easily established, at least to my satisfaction. We have to believe many things that 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

<sup>11</sup>Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln: Speeches, Letters, and State Papers, Nicolay and Hay.

be rather 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.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup>L. E. Chittenden, *Recollections*, pp. 448-450.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### LINCOLN'S FAITH IN PRAYER

Those who have followed this story thus far may have suspected the writer is either consciously or subconsciously aware of an antagonistic view which he is seeking to meet, namely, the opinion that Lincoln was not a Christian, but held a contrary belief, atheism, agnosticism, universalism, spiritualism, or any of the other isms whose followers have claimed him as fellow believer with themselves. It is now proposed to assay Lincoln's faith by an analysis of his belief in, and practice of prayer, and truly no test can be more revealing. "As a man prayeth, so is he" is not violently wresting the meaning of scripture. Old acquaintances said Lincoln had no religion, basing their opinion on his having said that God is "not a person." What he must have meant by that was probably akin to the thought of the prophet Balaam: "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent." He must have been denying limitations to God, not affirming limitations. Can any one quote a single sentence in which Lincoln speaks of God that does not assume and imply His personality? And such a belief is the very essence of prayer: He that cometh to God must believe that he *is*, and that he is the rewarder of all that diligently seek him." Condense that and you have this, "Every praying man believes in a personal

God." Or, in other words, the very act of prayer assumes and asserts that God is a person.

The proofs that Lincoln believed in prayer might well be grouped about the following statements: (1) he requested that the people pray for him; (2) he requested numerous ministers and others who called on him to pray in his presence; (3) he prayed secretly and in the presence of others; (4) he testified both as to his faith in prayer and of answers to his prayers; (5) he made personal vows to God and paid them, of which the abolition of slavery was one; (6) on numerous occasions he officially called the whole nation to prayer and thanksgiving. Weigh those facts; they are important and the proofs are conclusive. They will be found in the following pages.

From his earliest childhood, he had been taught the importance, the meaning, the power, and the practice of prayer, and the anchor held through storms and tides and drifting sands. When the personal grief over Willie's death in 1862 was added to the overwhelming burden of defeated armies, his mind went back to those early days: "I had a good Christian mother, and I remember her prayers. They have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life." On another occasion he said: "All that I am, all that I hope to be, I owe to my angel mother—blessings on her memory."

Of the three professions, law, medicine and the Gospel ministry, it will probably be agreed that the lawyer least frequently urges his client to

appeal to the Throne of Grace for help in winning his battle. But in his book *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome* the converted priest "Father" Chiniquy tells of the determined effort of the Catholic hierarchy to crush him through a court trial in Urbana, Illinois in 1856. Lincoln was one of the three attorneys employed to defend him. The aim of the trial was to ruin Chiniquy's reputation and influence, and a priest named LeBelle unexpectedly testified that "Mr. Chiniquy had attempted to do the most infamous things with my own sister, Madame Bossey." The sister had told her story to her brother under oath but was unable to be in court on account of illness. Mr. Lincoln was able to discount this testimony by witnesses who swore to the unreliability of LeBelle's veracity, but when the court adjourned at 10:00 p.m. Lincoln felt that the jury was unconvinced. He suggested that Chiniquy prove an alibi, but the plot had been cunningly devised to secure conviction by perjury and no date had been specified. Madame Bossey would probably have recovered by tomorrow and would confirm her brother's story. Lincoln advised his client: "The only way to be sure of a favorable verdict tomorrow is that God Almighty will take our part and show your innocence. Go to Him and pray, for He alone can save you."

Overwhelmed by the probability of being convicted in court on such a heinous offense, Chiniquy prayed fervently from eleven until three in the morning, when Lincoln rapped on his door: "Cheer up, Mr. Chiniquy, I have the two perjured

priests in my hands; their diabolical plot is all known, and if they do not fly away before dawn of the day, they surely will be lynched. Bless the Lord, you are saved."

What had happened reads like Peter's escape from prison. The Chicago papers reported: "It is probable that Mr. Chiniquy will be condemned; for the testimony of the Rev. Mr. LeBelle seems to leave no doubt that he is guilty." The newsboys shouted: "Chiniquy will be hung." Narcisse Terrien urged his wife to go with him to Urbana on the night train and tell what she knew and save their friend. Not being well, she sent Philomene Moffat in her place. These two young women, friends of Eugenia Bossey, were visiting her, and were in an adjoining room when they heard LeBelle promise his sister, Madame Bossey, 160 acres of land and priestly absolution if she would perjure herself in defaming Chiniquy. Miss Moffat gave Lincoln her story.

While Chiniquy was praying, LaBelle, troubled by his conscience or his fears, was unable to sleep and came down to look over the hotel register. The name of Philomene Moffat was like an apparition. He found her and offered her one hundred dollars to return to Chicago, but she was adamant. LeBelle woke his lawyer and told him to withdraw his suit; then woke his fellow perjurer and fled the city. The affidavits and facsimiles in proof of this strange story appear in Chiniquy's book (*see pages 654-367*).

Lincoln still attributed Chiniquy's victory to the Lord when he met him later: "The way you

have been saved when, I confess it again, I thought everything was nearly lost, is one of the most extraordinary occurrences I ever saw. It makes me remember what I have too often forgotten and what my mother often told me when young—that our God is a prayer-hearing God. This good thought sown into my young heart by that dear mother's hand was in my mind when I told you to go and pray. But I confess to you that I had not faith enough to believe that your prayer would be so quickly and so marvelously answered."

This same converted priest visited Lincoln on three several occasions, August 1861, June 1862 and June 9, 1864 to warn him of the plans that had been made to assassinate him, a subject on which Mr. Lincoln already had premonitions. On this last visit when Lincoln expressed his willingness to die in the Lord's chosen way, the interview was closed. Chiniquy says: "I was beside myself. Bathed in tears, I tried to say something, but could not utter a word. I knew the hour to leave had come. I asked the President's 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."<sup>1</sup>

From the time of Mr. Lincoln's election in November 1860 to the date of his inauguration in March 1861, there was an increasing tensivity of feeling, like heavily charged clouds when an electric storm has gathered and is about to break.

<sup>1</sup>Fifty Years in the Church of Rome, p. 662, 710.

The slavery states were determined to break down all the limitations of territory that had been placed upon slavery. Lincoln was the avowed foe of any extension of slave territory. The South was determined that they would not have this duly elected President to rule over them. Only two ways were open to prevent it: assassination and secession, and both were being planned, and Lincoln knew it. No President ever anticipated his coming administration with less hope of pleasure in it. In January he said to his friend Judge Joseph Gillespie:

I see the duty devolving upon me. I have read, upon my knees, the story of Gethsemane, where the Son of God prayed in vain that the cup of bitterness might pass from him. I am in the garden of Gethsemane now, and my cup of bitterness is full and overflowing.

Judge Gillespie consoled him, saying Christ's unanswered prayer culminating in His crucifixion had redeemed the world from Paganism, so the sacrifice demanded of him might likewise bring about a great benefit. That prophecy was fulfilled.<sup>2</sup>

Lincoln attended a special prayer meeting called to pray for the President elect, in Springfield in 1861, of which he said: "This has been a good meeting. I hardly know how it could have been better. I feel very grateful for the prayers offered in my behalf and hope they may be answered."<sup>3</sup>

At his last service of the First Presbyterian Church, bidding Dr. Smith good-bye, he said:

<sup>2</sup>Henry C. Whitney, *Lincoln the Citizen*, p. 202.

<sup>3</sup>Lincoln's Scrapbook, p. 51.

“Doctor, I wish to be remembered in the prayers of yourself and our church members.”<sup>4</sup>

Speaking from the platform of his departing train, February 11, 1861, he said:

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 and aid me, I must fail; but if the same Omniscient Mind and 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 and faith you will invoke His wisdom and guidance for me.<sup>5</sup>

Two days later a public reception was held for him in the State Capitol building at Columbus, Ohio, of which event the Rev. George B. Stewart, D.D., LL.D. president of Auburn Theological Seminary, relates the following incident under date of November 14, 1912:

A public reception was given to President-elect Lincoln in the State Capital (February 13, 1861), during which he stood in the rotunda by the stairway leading to the Senate Chamber or the House. My brother, who was about twelve years of age, and I about seven, were in the line that passed by the President and shook hands with him. Just ahead of me was an old woman, plainly clad, with a shawl over her head. She seemed to me, as a little boy, to be very old, but may not have been such in fact. When she reached the President she took his hand in both of hers and said, “God bless you, my son.”

He took her hand in his and, bending down from what seemed to me to be a great height, she put her hand upon his head and repeated the blessing, “God bless you, my

<sup>4</sup>Daily Illinois State Register, December 10, 1898.

<sup>5</sup>Weekly Illinois State Journal, February 13, 1861.

son," to which he responded, "Amen, mother."

She then passed and it came my turn to shake hands with the President. As he took my hand I looked up into his face and saw the tears rolling down his cheeks. The incident is burned into my memory as one of those ineffaceable events of life. I never saw him again alive. The next time I saw him was when he was lying in his coffin, in state, in the same rotunda, within a few feet of the spot where I had witnessed the above incident four years before.<sup>6</sup>

Of the many people whom the President asked to pray for him in the White House let his private secretary, John G. Nicolay speak:

Mr. Lincoln was a praying man; I know that to be a fact. And I have heard him request people to pray for him, which he would never have done had he not believed that prayer is answered.

Many a time I have heard Mr. Lincoln ask ministers and Christian women to pray for him, and he did not do this for effect. He was no hypocrite. He had such reverence for sacred things that he would not trifle with them. I have heard him say that he prayed.<sup>7</sup>

Read the testimony of two of these ministers; Bishop Simpson:

One day, in the darkest time of the war, I called to see Mr. Lincoln. We talked long and earnestly about the situation. When I rose to go, Mr. Lincoln stepped to the door and turned the key and said: "Bishop, I feel the need of prayer as never before. Please pray with me."

And so we knelt down in that room together and all through the prayer the President responded most fervently.<sup>8</sup>

Bishop Edmund S. Janes:

Many times during the war, when I visited Lincoln in

<sup>6</sup>William H. Bates, *The Religious Opinions and Life of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 55.

<sup>7</sup>William E. Curtis, *The True Abraham Lincoln*, p. 385.

<sup>8</sup>Homiletic Review, Vol. LVII, 1909, p. 156.



his private office in Washington, he said: "Do not go, Bishop, until you have prayed with me. We need your prayers and the divine direction in these critical hours."

And so, time after time, I knelt by Mr. Lincoln in the White House when we two were alone, and carried the cause of the Union and the needs of the President's anxious heart and of our distracted country to the Lord in prayer.<sup>9</sup>

The most remarkable of all such incidents was related by a grandson of Henry Ward Beecher, Samuel Scoville Jr. of Philadelphia and recorded for us by the Rev. William J. Johnstone. Mr. Scoville heard the story from Mrs. Beecher herself and from Mr. Shearman, counsel for Mr. Beecher. Mr. Beecher's son, an attorney in New York City, also told Mr. Johnstone that he knew his mother had told of the incident and another grandson of Henry Ward Beecher, Rev. David G. Downey, D.D., once book editor of the Methodist Episcopal Church also says that he heard his grandmother, Mrs. Beecher, tell the story.

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.

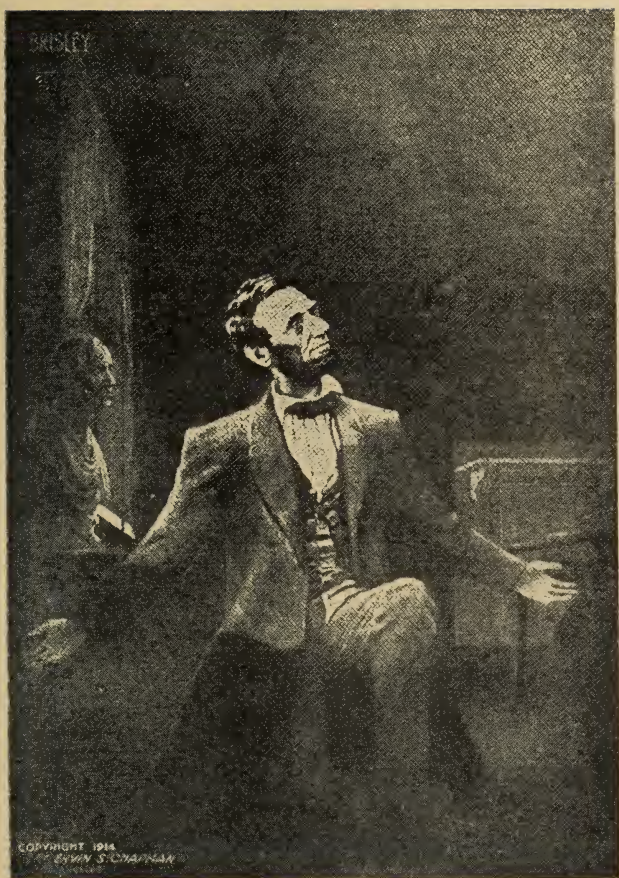
Late one evening a stranger called at his home and

<sup>9</sup>Gen. James F. Rushing, *Men and Things I Saw in the Civil War Days*, p. 417.

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 of the South. Mr. Beecher, 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 him 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 Him.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup>W. J. Johnstone, *How Lincoln Prayed*, pp. 36-41.



President Lincoln During the Battle of Gettysburg  
From a painting by Brisley  
Courtesy of Revell Co.

## CHAPTER XXV

### LISTENING IN ON LINCOLN'S PRAYERS

Willingness to have other people pray for you, and even with you, does not of itself furnish infallible proof that one is a sincere Christian. If an evangelist would call for all those unwilling to be prayed for to stand up, there would be few to accept the challenge, for even the confirmed atheist would consider that it could do no harm. You have heard the testimony of a few of those whom Lincoln asked to pray for him and with him. We have not used all the witnesses. We are now calling those who heard him pray.

It is Monday, March 4, 1861. South Carolina has passed a Secession Ordinance the previous December 20 and other states followed. Representatives of six Southern states met in Montgomery, Alabama on February 4 to 18 and formed the Confederacy. Jefferson Davis had been chosen President, and had said in his inaugural address on February 18: ". . . a reunion with 'the states from which we have separated is neither practicable nor desirable.'" President Buchanan had allowed this situation to develop without rebuke, and Lincoln was helpless to act until the day of his inauguration. And now he is about to make the address that is to deny the right of any state to secede from the Union, which is virtually a declaration of the Civil War, and such it proved to be. On that Monday morning he fin-

ished writing the conclusion to his inaugural address, and after reading it to his family, asked to be alone. The family retired to an adjoining room, where they overheard the President, threatened by enemies ready to take his life, commending his country, himself 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."<sup>1</sup>

But this incident does not stand alone. Major James B. Merwin wrote under the caption *What was Abraham Lincoln's Religion*:

I knew Mr. Lincoln intimately from 1854 to the day of his assassination. Dined with him that day. He came to be one of the most profoundly Christian men I ever knew. He had no religious cant about him at all. He was divinely aided, and asked—begged—for such guidance, conscious of his own need of help beyond any human aid.<sup>2</sup>

A negro clergyman writing for *The New York Tribune* of April 30, 1870, says:

In the year 1865, while at Freedmen's village, on Arlington Heights, after the assassination, but three weeks before Mrs. Lincoln left the White House, I dined with the servants employed at the house, some of whom had been engaged in personal attendance upon Mr. Lincoln. My object was really to know more about him whose memory is still dear to me. I asked the servants how Mr. Lincoln treated them. I was told that frequently, late at night, Mr. Lincoln came downstairs to teach them to read, and often took such occasions to draw their thoughts toward the Saviour of all mankind. He also prayed with them.

<sup>1</sup>Lincoln Scrapbook, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Major B. Mervin, *What Was Abraham Lincoln's Religion?*, p. 26.

Professor Murdock, actor and teacher of elocution, who spent time in visiting the soldiers camps and a frequent guest at the White House, says :

I spent three weeks in the White House with Mr. Lincoln as his guest. One night—it was just after the Battle of Bull Run—I was restless and could not sleep. I was repeating the part which I was to take in a public performance. The hour was past midnight—indeed, it was coming near the dawn—when I heard low tones proceeding from a private room near where the President slept. The door was partly open. I saw the President kneeling beside an open window. The light was turned low in the room. His back was toward me. For a moment I was silent, looking in amazement and wonder. Then he cried out in tones so pleading and sorrowful, that the astonished listener was transfixed:

“O, thou God who heard Solomon in the night when he prayed for wisdom, hear me. I cannot lead this people, I cannot guide the affairs of this nation without Thy help. I am poor and weak and sinful. O God, who didst hear Solomon when he cried for wisdom, hear me and save this nation.”<sup>3</sup>

The following account is taken from the memorial sermon of the Rev. John Falkner Blake, rector of Christ Church, Bridgeport, Connecticut, April 19, 1865 shortly after Lincoln's assassination :

A distinguished lawyer of New York who is a professing Christian and an intimate friend of my informant had occasion some time since to see the President in Washington. He went to the White House, met Mr. Lincoln and asked for an interview of an hour. Mr. Lincoln said that the pressure of public duties forced him to decline such an interview. He urged that it was important. The President still declined. The gentleman was leaving

<sup>3</sup>The Presbyterian, April 5, 1893.

when Mr. Lincoln stopped him and asked if he would be willing to come at five o'clock the next morning. He gladly agreed to do so and arrived at the White House the next morning, as he supposed, at five o'clock.

On consulting his watch at the street lamp he found he had made a mistake of an hour and that it was only four o'clock. He determined to walk about the grounds until the time agreed upon. Coming near a window of one of the rooms of the Presidential Mansion, he heard sounds of apparent distress. On listening he found it was the voice of the President engaged in an agony of prayer. The burden of his petition was:

"O God, I cannot see my way. Give me light. I am ignorant, give me wisdom. Teach me what to do and help me to do it. Our country is in peril. O God, it is Thy country; save it for Christ's sake."

Here the gentleman felt his position to be questionable, and passing on, he left the President with his God. On entering the White House he mentioned what he had heard to the usher, who informed him that the President spent the hour between four and five every morning in prayer.

How like our Savior, of whom it is recorded, "In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed unto a solitary place, and there prayed!"

The Methodist Episcopal Bishop, Charles E. Fowler, quotes the following from Doctor Newell Dwight Hillis:

I have a woman in my congregation who is the daughter of the Presbyterian minister (Doctor Gurley) in whose church Mr. Lincoln worshiped during the war. She says: "Mr. Lincoln frequently came to our house in the evening, stopped at the door, and said to my father, 'Doctor, you must pray tonight.'"

"One night he called at half-past one, called my father up and said: 'Doctor, you must come down and go to my room with me. I need you.'"

"My father went and found Mr. Lincoln's room strewn

with maps, where he was marking the movements of troops. He said to my father: 'There is your room. You go in there and pray, and I will stay here and watch.'

"My father heard him repeatedly praying for the army. Three times he came to my father's room and fell down on his face on the floor by his side and prayed mightily to God to bless the boys about to die for the republic, and and to save the republic."<sup>4</sup>

Lincoln once said to his friend Judge Henry C. Whitney: "I have been driven many times upon 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." It is fitting to connect this with Judge Whitney's opinion of Lincoln's prayers:

We sadly know that too many Christians pray perfunctorily simply to pray to observe the Christian habit and fashion; but Lincoln did not pray as a form or as an end. His prayers were for a utilitarian purpose and object—to obtain help in time of dire need.

His prayers were not those of the hypocrites "who stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men" nor did he "use vain repetitions as the heathen do," but he entered into his closet and when he had shut the door prayed to his Father in secret.

He believed in the direct intervention of God in our national affairs, and he frequently used to ask Him in a direct, manly way to grant this boon, avert that disaster, or advise him what to do in a given contingency.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Bishop C. H. Fowler, *Patriotic Orations*.

<sup>5</sup>Henry C. Whitney, *Lincoln, the Citizen*, p. 207.



## CHAPTER XXVI

### DRIVEN TO HIS KNEES

To be the First Lady of the Land had been the long and fondly cherished dream of Mary Todd, but its sweetness turned to wormwood before it became a reality, for the glitter of the gay society of 1847 when she had been a congressman's wife, had suddenly tarnished in 1861, for the royalty of those early days with its carriages and gems and slaves, was largely furnished by the South, and now the South had seceded, and taken with it the voice of mirth and gladness. It was as if some one had skimmed off all the cream and left only the blue skim milk, and even this had soured, but one must drink it to the last drop.

How different the force that impelled her husband to go to that somber city! En route from Springfield to Washington, he spoke in Independence Hall in Philadelphia on Washington's birthday on the duty of maintaining the rights and liberty bequeathed to us: "If this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle, I was about to say I would rather be assassinated on the spot than to surrender it. . . . I have said nothing but what I am willing to live by, and, if it be the pleasure of Almighty God, die by."

Nor was he using that word "assassination" unadvisedly, for odds were being offered at that moment in Washington that he would never be inaugurated, and the last lap of the journey

thither was made on the advice of the Pinkerton detectives in disguise, and by a route not in the original plan. The inauguration over, the new Cabinet was assembled, with some of them hostile to one another, and most of them feeling themselves superior to this "third rate petty lawyer" from the West, whom they considered quite incompetent for the Presidency under favorable conditions, and how much more so, with the country disorganized and disintegrating on account of his election. It was the hope of multitudes even in the North that he would recognize his utter incompetency for the task, and resign in favor of someone—perhaps Jefferson Davis—who would let the South have her way either in seceding from the Union quietly or extending slavery to the last frontier.

Added to the Cabinet difficulties, four Democrats and three Republicans of whom two (Seward and Chase) were jealous of the President, considering themselves the person who should have been the party choice, and the third (Cameron) of questionable integrity, forced upon him by a convention promise made in Lincoln's name; there was the seige of Fort Sumter by the Confederate state of South Carolina within whose bounds it was, of which Seward advised the surrender in contravention of Lincoln's declared purpose in his inaugural address: "The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy and possess the property and places belonging to the Government. . . ."

Then there was the difficulty of getting a com-

mander for the Northern Army. Robert E. Lee was recommended by General Scott as best suited for the place, and though he was strongly against secession, considering it rebellion against the Union that he loved, he would not lead an army against the South, and resigned his commission and withdrew from the United States Army. Virginia soon joined the Confederacy, and Lee's home, the present site of Arlington Cemetery immediately across the Potomac from Washington, being in that state, he gave his service to that side of the conflict. Scott said of that blow, "This is a more serious loss than would be the going over of 20,000 men," and his valuation seems to have been conservative, for weeks lengthened into months, and months into years before Lincoln could displace such incompetents as McClellan and Fremont who always wanted more time and more men before attempting battle. In the meantime, Confederate victories filled the South with enthusiasm, while the North was so reduced by defeatism that many demanded that the war should cease.

Lincoln's mail was heavy, heavy in every sense of the word. Colonel W. O. Stoddard, one of his private secretaries, tells us about "his day" after the defeat of Chancellorsville, May 2-4, 1863, in which seventeen thousand Union men had lost their lives. The telegram was read to the President, who with tears running down his cheeks, exclaimed, "My God, my God, what will the country say! What will the country say?" Stoddard wrote in 1913:

The country was weary of the long war, with its draining taxes of gold and blood. Discontent was everywhere raising its head, and opponents of the Lincoln administration were savage in their denunciations. Many of his severest critics were men of unquestionable patriotism. The mail desk in the secretary's office in the White House was heaped with letters, as if the President could read them. He knew their purport well enough without reading. He knew of the forever vacant places in a hundred thousand households before Chancellorsville. If more than a third of each day's mail already consisted of measureless denunciation; if another large part was made up of piteous pleas for peace, for a termination of the long murder of the Civil War, what would it be when tidings of this last slaughter should get out and send back echoes from the heart-stricken multitude? Had not enough been endured, and was there not imminent peril that the country would refuse to endure any more? This question was, perhaps, the darkest element in the problem presented to Mr. Lincoln; for the armies, East or West, were ample in force and ready to fight again. Would the country stand back of him?

There were callers at the White House the day on which the news of the defeat was brought; but they were not the customary throng. Members of the Senate and House came, with gloomy faces; the members of the Cabinet came, to consult or to condole with the President. There were army and navy officers, but only such as were sent for. The house was as if a funeral were going forward, and those who entered or left it trod softly, as people always do around a coffin, for fear they may wake the dead.

That night the last visitors in Lincoln's room were Stanton and Halleck. They went away together in silence, at somewhere near nine o'clock, and the President was left alone. Not another soul was on that floor except the one secretary (Mr. Stoddard), who was busy with the mail in his room across the hall from the President's; and the doors of both rooms were ajar, for the night was

warm. The silence was so deep that the ticking of a clock would have been noticeable; but another sound came that was almost as regular and ceaseless. It was the tread of the President's feet as he strode slowly back and forth across the chamber in which so many Presidents of the United States had done their work. Was he to be the last of the line, the last President of the United States? At that hour that very question had been asked of him by the battle of Chancellorsville. If he had wavered, if he had failed in faith or courage or prompt decision, then the nation, and not the Army of the Potomac, would have lost its great battle. It was the crucial test.

Ten o'clock came, without a break in the steady march, excepting now and then a pause in turning at either wall.

There was an unusual accumulation of letters, for that was a desk hard worked with other duties also, and it was necessary to clear it before leaving it. It seemed as if they contained a double allowance of denunciation, threats, ribaldry. Some of them were hideous, some were tear-blistered. Some would have done Lincoln good if he could have read them; but, over there in his room, he was reading the lesson of Chancellorsville and the future of the republic. Eleven o'clock came, and then another hour of that ceaseless march so accustomed the ear to it that when, a little after twelve, there was a break of several minutes, the sudden silence made one put down letters and listen. The President may have been at his table writing, or he may—no man knows or can guess; but at the end of the minutes, long or short, the tramp began again. Two o'clock and he was walking yet, and when, a little after three, the secretary's task was done and he slipped noiselessly out, he turned at the head of the stairs for a moment. It was so—the last sound he heard as he went down was the footfall in Lincoln's room.

That was not all, however. The young man had need to return early, and he was there again before eight o'clock. The President's room door was open and he went in. There sat Mr. Lincoln eating breakfast alone. He had not been out of his room; but there was a kind of cheery,

hopeful, morning light on his face, instead of the funereal battle cloud from Chancellorsville. He had watched all night, but a dawn had come, for beside his cup of coffee lay the written draft of his instructions to General Hooker to push forward, to fight again. There was a decisive battle won that night in that long vigil with disaster and despair. Only a few weeks later the Army of the Potomac fought it over again as desperately—and they won it—at Gettysburg.<sup>1</sup>

But there was a sequel to that story in the Battle of Gettysburg on July 1, 2, and 3, and the surrender of Vicksburg on the next day, July 4. These constituted the turning point of the Civil War. It is Sabbath afternoon, July 5. General Sickles wounded at Gettysburg is lying in Washington, one leg having been amputated. General James F. Rusling, a member of his staff, is calling on him, when in comes the President and Tad, Lincoln clad in linen duster, trousers in boot tops, spurs, etc. Rusling becomes the listener and later the reporter of the conversation which concerned the war in general and the battle of Gettysburg in particular, for an hour or more. Sickles is speaking:

“Were you concerned about the battle?”

“No,” Lincoln replied, “I was not. Some of my Cabinet and many others in Washington were, but I had no fears.”

Sickles naturally was curious as to Lincoln's strange confidence when the forces were so evenly matched, and General Lee was in command of the enemy. When he pressed the matter, Lin-

<sup>1</sup>The Rev. William Hayes Ward, D.D., *Abraham Lincoln, Tributes from His Associates*, pp. 47-49.

coln hesitated, then gave this remarkable testimony :

Well, I will tell you how it was, but I would rather you wouldn't say anything about it just now, for the people might not understand. 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 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."<sup>2</sup>

General Sickles then asked him his opinion about the possibilities at Vicksburg where the seige had been going on for more than six months, but the news of its fall had not yet reached the President. He replied: "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 . . . deeply touching." Such incidents make us think of another lonely wrestler on the banks of the Jabbock, dreading the battle with Esau's superior hosts on the coming day, but winning the

<sup>2</sup>Major James F. Pershing, *Men and Things I Saw in the Civil War Days*, p. 15.

battle on the previous night, and declared to be a "prince with God."

Strangely enough, it was the following Thursday; Lincoln is sitting at the dinner table but cannot eat, for 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, their Christian nurse, said, "Mr. Lincoln, prayer will do what nothing else can; can you not pray?"

"Yes, I will. Pray for me." And with the tears dropping from his haggard face, he picked up his Bible and went to his room. Mrs. Pomeroy said: "Could all the people of the nation have overheard the earnest petition that went up from that inner chamber, as they reached the ears of the nurse, they would have fallen on their knees with tearful and reverential sympathy."

When a dispatch announced the victory that evening, he came to her room, beaming joy: "Good news! Good news! Port Hudson is ours! The victory is ours, and God is good."

"Nothing like prayer in times of trouble, Mr. Lincoln."

"Yes, oh yes,—praise—prayer and praise go together."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Lincoln Scrapbook, p. 54.



## CHAPTER XXVII

### FORGOTTEN VOWS

“Boys, by the Eternal God, if ever I get a chance to hit that thing, I’ll hit it hard.” So spoke Lincoln on that day in his youth when he and his companions stood and watched a young Mulatto girl being sold on the auction block. The Eternal God seems to have been waiting to hear such a vow, and to have taken the youth at his word. A more unlikely future emancipator of the American slaves, humanly speaking, than this gawky ignoramus from Illinois, would have been hard to select. But He that searcheth the heart and trieth the spines of men seems to have judged that with some very severe tempering this man could do the job, for he had a tender heart, a wise head, a daring and unconquerable will. And it would take them all.

We may well wonder what Lincoln meant when he said, “If ever I get a chance” and “I’ll hit it hard.” Did he have a hope that so insignificant a person as he should ever attain to such proportions as to really hit that deep-rooted institution of slavery such a blow that it would even register sensation? As he grew older and wiser, he learned something of the tremendous giant he proposed to challenge. If he were to hit it hard, he must not strike awkwardly. Cunning was better than brute force where the odds were so tremendously one-sided.

Lincoln was not an abolitionist in the strict sense of the word; his law partner, Herndon, was. Lincoln was an emancipationist. He recognized that to set the slaves free all at once and without compensation to their owners, would create problems for both blacks and whites. He hoped for a more excellent way.

During those two years in the national legislature (1847-1849) he introduced a bill for the gradual and compensated extinction of slavery in the District of Columbia. He did this single-handed, receiving no encouragement from Abolitionist or Non-Abolitionist, but an accompanying statement said that he had ascertained that the representative people of the District privately approved it, but that he had no right to commit them to public support of it. It died for lack of support as he doubtless expected, but he had performed his duty.

Failing of renomination, Lincoln retired to his private law practice until the threatened extension of slavery to all the newly acquired territory, northwest and southwest, and even into the northeastern states, challenged him to re-enter politics. Securing the nomination of his party for the United States Senatorship to oppose Senator Douglas of the Democratic party, the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates ensued. Contrary to the advice of his party he opened with the argument that the nation "cannot endure half slave and half free."

To condense those seven three-hour debates into a single paragraph is out of the realm of

possibility; suffice it to say that they centered about this question of the extension of slave territory. Both claimed to be following out the intention of the founders of the nation. Listen to Douglas: "When Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Hamilton, Jay and the other great men of that day made this government, they divided it into slave States and Free States, and left each State perfectly free to do as it pleased on the question of slavery. Why can it not exist on the same principles on which our fathers made it? . . . . At the time the Constitution was framed there were thirteen States in the Union, twelve of which were slave holding States and one a free State. Suppose this doctrine of uniformity, preached by Mr. Lincoln, that the States should all be free or all be slave had prevailed. What would have been the result? Of course the twelve slaveholding States would have overruled the one free State, and slavery would have been fastened by a constitutional provision on every inch of the American Republic, instead of being left as our fathers wisely left it for each state to decide for itself."

Then hear Lincoln: "I leave it to you to say whether the institution of slavery has ever been a bond of union,—and if it has not always been an apple of discord and an element of division in the house? . . . If so then I have a right to say that in regard to this question the Union is a house divided against itself: and when the Judge reminds me that I have often said to him that the institution of slavery has existed for seventy years in some states, and yet it does not exist in

some others, I agree to the fact, and I account for it by looking at the position in which our fathers placed slavery—restricting it from new territories where it had not gone, and legislating to cut off its source by abrogating the slave-trade, thus putting the seal of legislation against its spread. The public mind did rest in the belief that it was in the course of ultimate extinction. But lately . . . he and those acting with him, have placed this institution on a new basis, which looks to the perpetuity and nationalization of slavery.”

In the course of the debate Douglas said concerning Kansas, “I care not whether slavery is voted up or voted down.” And again he said: “Now I hold that Illinois has a right to abolish slavery, as she did, and I hold that Kentucky has the same right to continue slavery and protect it that Illinois has to abolish it.” Lincoln took advantage of this opening to expose the morality of the man who “cared not” about slavery, and considered slaves “on a par with onions and potatoes.” He continued: “Judge Douglas contends that whatever community wants slaves has a right to have them: and so they have, if slavery is right, but if slavery is wrong they can have no right to do wrong . . . . There can be no comparison between right and wrong.” “The Republican party thinks that slavery is a moral, a social and a political wrong.” “I have always hated slavery as much as any abolitionist.” But in contrast with the Abolitionist, he said: “I have no purpose directly to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I

have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so. I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and black races.”

We can get the contrast between Lincoln and John Brown who made his attempt to “hit it (slavery) hard,” to use Lincoln’s erstwhile phrase. With eighteen men, Brown had made his insurrectionary raid into the South in October 1859, and was soon subdued by Robert E. Lee at Harper’s Ferry in Virginia. Just before he was hanged he was asked, “How do you justify your acts?” He replied: “I think, my friend, you are guilty of a great wrong against God and humanity—I say it without wishing to be offensive—and it would be perfectly right for any one to interfere with you so far as to free those you sinfully and wickedly hold in bondage. I think I did right, and that others will do right who interfere with you at any time and at all times.” Lincoln condemned Brown’s act as lawless and worthy to be classed with the assassination of kings and emperors: “An enthusiast broods over the oppression of a people till he fancies himself commissioned by Heaven to liberate them.”<sup>1</sup>

In his inaugural address, President Lincoln quotes his previous public speeches that he has no intention or right to interfere with slavery in States where it exists, quotes his party platform to show that he was elected on that understanding, quotes the Fugitive Slave Law as an integral part of the Constitution, and declares

<sup>1</sup>Cooper Institute Speech, February, 1860.

his intention to "take the official oath today with no mental reservations, and with no purpose to construe the Constitution or laws by any hypercritical rules." Has he not forgotten his youthful vow, sworn with an oath, to hit slavery hard? Has he not deliberately tied his own hands so that he will be helpless to free the slaves?

The war so soon to begin, is so far as Lincoln is concerned, a war to save the Union, not to free the slaves. He states this clearly in answering Greeley's censorious letter, accusing him of timidity in not freeing the slaves, a year and a half later:

I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. . . . If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. . . . My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union, without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could do it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union. . . . I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause. I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors, and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views. I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free.

Since the Southern States were in open rebellion and the war was already on, the Abolitionists and their sympathizers thought that the time

had come to declare all slaves free. But there were border States, border in a double sense, for they were on the border of seceding: Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, Louisiana, Texas. There were also a multitude of Democrats in the North, politically bound to the South. Should all this potential force be traded for the doubtful strength of the freed slaves who could not if they would, leave their plantations? But the Abolitionists were clamoring.

General Fremont who had been the Republican candidate for President in 1856 and had not lost his political ambitions, and who was now in command of the Army of the West, took the bit in his teeth, and without consulting the President, issued a proclamation that all Missourians who take up arms or in any way aid the South shall have their property confiscated and their slaves set free. Lincoln asked him to recall the proclamation, and the matter was finally adjusted through the intercession of Mrs. Fremont by Lincoln recalling it, which riled the North about as much as Fremont's proclamation had roused the border States.

Next Cameron, Secretary of War,—was he seeking to divert attention from the army-contract scandals of his own department?—issued a pamphlet containing this passage: “Those who make war against the Government justly forfeit all rights of property, privilege, or security derived from the Constitution and laws against which they are in armed rebellion; and as the labor and service of their slaves constitute the chief

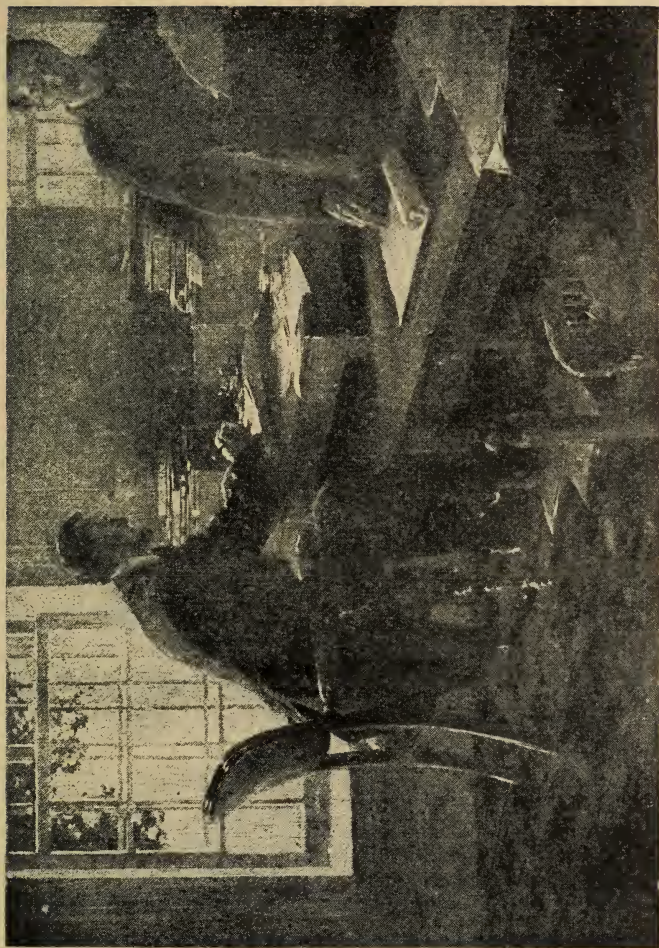
property of the rebels, such property should share in the common fate of war." Lincoln had this pamphlet recalled from the post office by telegraph and the offending clause deleted.

More months pass without apparent action from the President. Then his newspaper informs him that General Hunter has issued a paper declaring: "Slavery and martial law in a free country are altogether incompatible: the persons in . . . Georgia, Florida and South Carolina heretofore held as slaves are therefore declared forever free." Without waiting for confirmation—is this not the third time this has happened?—Lincoln issues his official repudiation:

I, Abraham Lincoln, . . . declare that the government of the United States had no knowledge, information, or belief of an intention on the part of General Hunter to issue such a proclamation; nor has it yet any authentic information that the document is genuine. And, further, that neither General Hunter or any other commander or person has been authorized . . . to make a proclamation declaring the slaves of any State free; and that the supposed proclamation now in question, whether genuine or false, is altogether void so far as respects such a declaration. I further make it known that whether it be competent for me, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, to declare the slaves of any State or States free, and whether, at any time, in any case, it shall have become a necessity indispensable to the maintenance of the Government to exercise such supposed power, are questions which, under my responsibility, I reserve to myself and which I cannot feel justified in leaving to the decision of commanders in the field.

Surely Lincoln is making every effort to save the Union *with slavery*. Has he forgotten his oath, "By the Eternal God, if ever I get a chance





President Lincoln in the War Department Telegraph Office  
Writing the First Draft of the Emancipation Proclamation

Drawn by C. M. Relyea

to hit that thing, I'll hit it hard." Hasn't God given him that chance? Is he not trying to reunite the Union, and at the same time refusing to remove the cause that has divided the Union? Will he heal the hurt of the people slightly, saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace?

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE VOICE THAT WOULD NOT BE SILENT

No, Lincoln has not forgotten his antipathy toward the institution of slavery. Neither has he forgotten his scheme to free the slaves gradually and with compensation for the owners. He discusses the plan with Sumner, one of the strong Abolitionists in the Senate. Hoping to begin with Delaware, he wrote letters to the senators opposed to the idea, urging that the purchase of all the slaves in four of the border States would cost no more than eighty-seven days of the war. In his message to Congress one year after his inauguration he mildly recommends the proposal "that the United States ought to cooperate with any State which may adopt gradual abolishment of slavery, giving to such State pecuniary aid, to be used by such State in its discretion, to compensate for the inconveniences, public and private, produced by such change of system. . . . In my judgment, gradual, and not sudden, emancipation is better for all. . . . Such a proposition on the part of the general government sets up no claim of a right by Federal authority to interfere with slavery within State limits, referring, as it does, the absolute control of the subject in each case to the State and its people immediately concerned."

Congress passed the necessary legislation. The District of Columbia was made immune to slavery, a million dollars was paid in compensation to

owners, and schools were voted for the education of negro children. The army and navy were forbidden to return runaway slaves, and the Negro republics of Haiti and Liberia were officially recognized. Although the border States icily ignored the proposal to pass suitable legislation, they had received their ultimatum: "Sell your slaves to the Federal Government, or else—"

In repeated circulars the President admonishes the State governors: "I do not argue; I beseech you to make the arguments for yourselves. You cannot, if you would, be blind to the signs of the times. . . . This proposal . . . acts not the Pharisee. The change it contemplates would come as the gentle rain from heaven—not rending or wrecking anything. Will you not embrace it? So much good has not been done by one effort in all past time, as, in the providence of God, it is now your high privilege to do. May the vast future not have to lament that you have neglected it."

Meanwhile the voices calling for a drastic stroke emancipating the slaves are becoming louder and more insistent. Not the least of these voices were economic necessity and military expediency. The slaves for whom the war was being fought were making it possible for the men of the South to leave their plantations and join the army, while farm labor was badly needed in the North by reason of the absence of the men and boys in the armed forces. This necessity in order to save the nation, Lincoln reasoned, released him from his oath to the slavery provisions of the Constitution:

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. It was in the oath I took that I would, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States. I could not take the office without taking the oath. Nor was it my view that I might take an oath to get power, and break the oath in using the power. I understood, too, that in ordinary civil administration this oath even forbade me to practically indulge my primary abstract judgment on the moral question of slavery. . . . Was it possible to lose the nation and yet preserve the Constitution?

By general law, life and limb must be protected; yet often a limb must be amputated to save a life; but a life is never wisely given to save a limb. I felt that measures otherwise unconstitutional might become lawful by becoming indispensable to the preservation of the Constitution, through the preservation of the nation. Right or wrong, I assumed this ground, and now avow it. . . . When in March and May and July, 1862, I made earnest and successive appeals to the border States to favor compensated emancipation, I believed the indispensable necessity for military emancipation and arming the blacks would come unless averted by that measure. They declined the proposition, and I was, in my best judgment, driven to the alternative of either surrendering the Union, and with it the Constitution, or of laying strong hand upon the colored element. I chose the latter. In choosing it, I hoped for greater gain than loss.

Now convinced that "we must free the slaves or be ourselves subdued," he drew up the rough draft of the Emancipation Proclamation on July 9, 1862. He then invited the Rev. Phineas Gurley whose church he attended to come to the White House and after conference with him, rewrote

it with the changes he suggested embodied. Next he summoned his lawyer friend, Swett, from Illinois by telegraph apparently that he might soliloquize in his presence. This done, he wished him a safe journey home. He calls the Cabinet in much the same fashion, not for their advice, as he said, but to acquaint them with the subject matter of the proclamation. It was a startling document, for it proposed to free the slaves of the disloyal States where the President had no actual power, and it exempted the slaveowners of all States and certain counties of Louisiana providing said territory remained loyal at the time of its taking effect. Thus the government that was fighting for the freedom of the slaves was, in appearance at least, trading the privilege of owning slaves for the loyalty of the masters.

The objections raised by members of the Cabinet had been anticipated and the President had all the answers ready. Seward approved of the Proclamation but feared that the series of defeats recently suffered by the Northern army would make it appear as "the last measure of an exhausted Government, a cry for help" and suggested that he wait for a military success. Lincoln was quick to see the force of that policy and immediately put it into the drawer of his desk and turned the key to await a victory. Meanwhile discontent with the progress of the war, and criticisms of the President's failure to free the slaves were constantly increasing.

During those days of waiting for victory, Lincoln did some very serious and profoundly reli-

gious thinking concerning "the will of God" and himself as "the instrument of providence." But of these meditations, more will be said later. On the 13th of September, 1862, a delegation of ministers representing a meeting held in Chicago the previous Sabbath, brought to the President a petition signed by many of the ministers of that city urging him to free the slaves without further delay. He did not tell them of the Proclamation then lying in his desk, but revealed something of his earnest effort to know and do God's will:

The subject presented in the memorial is one upon which I have thought much for weeks past, and I may even say for months. I am approached with the most opposite opinions and advice, and that by religious men who are equally certain that they represent the divine will. I am sure that either the one or the other class is mistaken in their belief, and perhaps in some respects both. I hope it will not be irreverent for me to say that if it is probable that God would reveal His will to others on a point so connected with my duty, it might be supposed He would reveal it directly to me; for, unless I am more deceived in myself than I often am, it is my earnest desire to know the will of Providence in this matter. And if I can learn what it is, I will do it.

These are not, however, the days of miracles, and I suppose it will be granted that I am not to expect a direct revelation. I must study the plain physical facts of the case, ascertain what is possible, and learn what appears to be wise and right.

The subject is difficult and good men do not agree. . . . And the same is true of religious people. Why, the rebel soldiers are praying with a great deal more earnestness, I fear, than our own troops, and expecting God to favor their side; for one of our soldiers who had been taken prisoner told Senator Wilson a few days since that he met with nothing so discouraging as the evident sin-

cerity of those he was among in their prayers. In their minds, no doubt their cause is just. But we will talk over the merits of the case.

He then explained his powerlessness to enforce any decree in the territory where his authority was not even recognized. He closed with this assurance:

I can assure you that the subject is on my mind, by day and night, more than any other. Whatever shall appear to be God's will, I will do. I trust that in the freedom with which I have canvassed your views I have not in any respect injured your feelings.

It must have seemed to these men that their efforts had been in vain, but in fact their visit had been very timely, as it gave the President the assurance for which he longed, that the churches would give their moral support to such a proclamation. Joseph Medill, editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, returning from Washington brought them this cheering message: "Secretary Stanton told me to say to those Chicago clergymen who waited on the President about the Emancipation Proclamation, that their interview finished the business. After that there was no manifestation of doubt or delay. Mr. Lincoln's mind was fully made up."

The long awaited victory came the following week, September 16 and 17 in the battle of Antietam. General McClellan who has been fretting the President for nearly a year and a half with his delays and defeats, and pleas that he is outnumbered and his horses are tired, has at last made an advance and defeated Lee, shall we say, in spite of himself. The battle was not decisive and was not followed up as it should have been,



for McClellan seems to have been more interested in appeasing the South, and being popular with the Northern Democrats, in the hope of being elected President in the next campaign than in being victorious over the South.

Nevertheless Lincoln called a Cabinet meeting on September 22, and after reading to them for a nerve tonic, perhaps, the latest effusion of Artemus Ward, to the disgust of Stanton, began the real business by saying:

The time for the annunciation of the emancipation policy can no longer be delayed. Public sentiment will sustain it, many of my warmest friends and supporters demand it, and I have promised God that I will do it.

I have, as you are aware, thought a great deal about the relation of this war to slavery. . . . 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. . . . I made the promise to myself—and to my Maker. The rebel army is now driven out, and I am going to fulfill that promise. . . . I do not wish your advice about the main matter, for that I have determined for myself. . . . I know very well that many others might, in this matter as in others, do better than I can. . . . 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 I feel I ought to take.”

Chase asked if he had correctly understood the sentence about the promise to God. Lincoln said:

“I have made a solemn vow before God, that if General Lee were driven back from Pennsylvania, I would crown the result by the declaration of freedom to the slaves.”

This vow and testimony of Lincoln is one of those incidents that later generations are apt to discredit as a made up story, or at least as exag-

gerated. By a remarkable coincidence it is doubly, then triply, authenticated. First of all, it was so startling that Chase, not believing his own ears, asked the President to repeat his statement, which the President did, making it clearer and stronger the second time. Secretary Chase recorded it in his diary, supposedly on the same day, from which the above statements are taken. Without any collusion, Secretary Gideon Welles also wrote an account in his diary on the same night, differing in words, but alike in details:

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.<sup>3</sup>

Now comes Frank B. Carpenter to the White House to spend six months in painting the historic scene which must be re-enacted for him again and again with details supplied by each member of the Cabinet, and in his book he quotes the President as 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.)

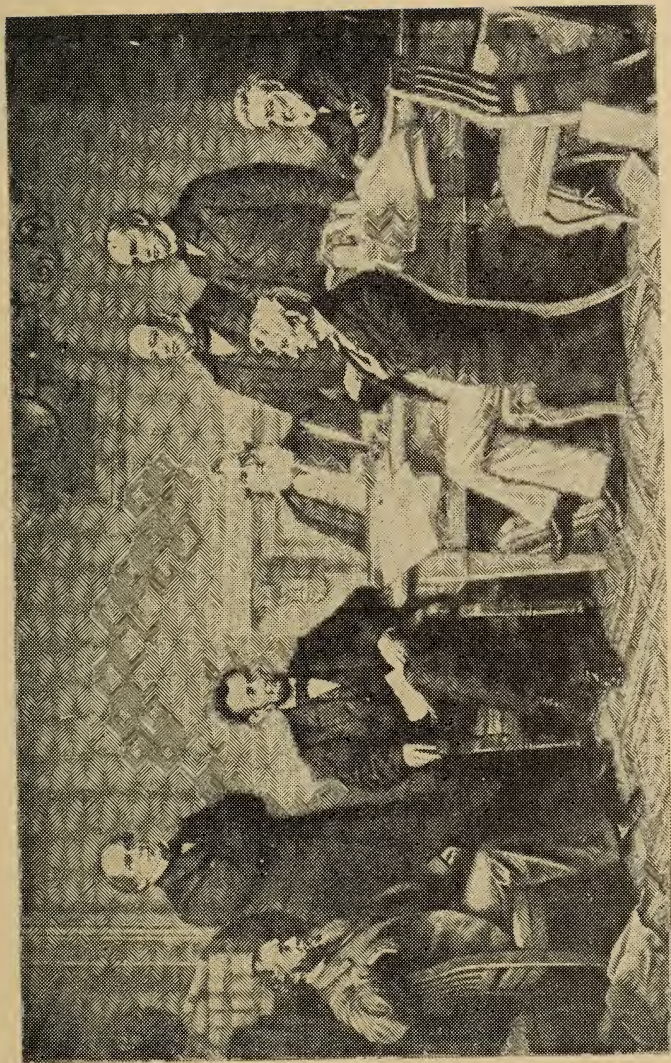
Lest he should repent, for Lincoln entered on momentous affairs (even his own marriage) with extreme caution, he issued the Proclamation that same day, but it was not to go into final effect until January 1, 1863, more than three months later. This would give time for the Southern States to return to the Union, if there was any such hope. As the time approached for the final enforcement, a certain doctor of divinity asked him very gravely whether he intended to enforce it on the set date. Lincoln, with a twinkle in his eye replied: "Well, Doctor, you know Peter was going to do it, but when the time came he didn't."

But although the intervening months had been stormy on the Stock Exchange, on the battlefields, and in the President's office, the Proclamation was put into force on the given date, for there was a voice that had called above the storms, a voice of authority over kings and presidents. A group of seven persons called on the President some time later to congratulate him on the success

<sup>3</sup>The Diary of Gideon Welles, Atlantic Monthly, 1909, p. 369.

of the Northern armies after the proclamation, of whom Dr. O. F. Presbrey was one. He quotes Mr. Lincoln's reply:

It is a great satisfaction to me to feel that I have the support of the people in the great struggle to save the Nation's life. I never believed in slavery, but I felt I was elected President of both the North and the South. When Sumter was fired upon, and I called for seventy-five thousand men, my determined purpose was to save the country and slavery, and I called for over half a million men with the same determination. But, on many a defeated field there was a voice louder than the thundering of cannon. It was the voice of God, crying, "Let my people go." We were all very slow in realizing it was God's voice, but after many humiliating defeats the nation came to believe it as a great and solemn command. Great multitudes begged and prayed that I might answer God's voice by signing the Emancipation Proclamation, and I did it, believing we never should be successful in the great struggle unless we obeyed the Lord's command. Since that the "God of Battles" has been on our side.



The President and His Cabinet Considering the Emancipation Proclamation  
From the Painting by F. B. Carpenter

## CHAPTER XXIX

### READING THE PRAYER-METER

Meticulous accuracy of measurement is one of the achievements of civilization. Micrometers, microdetectors, microscopes, microphones, are comparatively recent words in our language, and are significant of our age, and how much of our recent progress in every science is due to them, we little realize. But the human mind has always been given to measurement. Instrument boards crowded with dials may be recent in the mechanical world, but the human mind has always had such devices. For instance, in measuring a Christian we check the dials that register his creed, his church attendance, his knowledge of the Bible, his conversation, his conduct, his spirit, and his prayers; if all these give consistently high readings, we give him a high rating, and give him our confidence. But if one or more of them give a low or negative reading, the others are not only discounted accordingly, but they may all be nullified. We have been taking the readings for Abraham Lincoln. In the chapters immediately previous we have been reading the prayer dial, and we have not yet completed the reading.

But let us look for a moment at the prayer-measuring dial in the abstract without the usual human "guinea pig" on the scales. Visualize if you will, the figures 1-15 or higher, just inside the perimeter; what do these figures represent?

Number 1 represents formal prayer such as the lisping child repeats after the godly mother. It is closer to obedience to the mother's command than to real prayer. Number 2 represents the prayer habit formed; it is prompted more by the clock than by the heart. Number 3 represents the beginning of original petitions; here is a compound of incipient faith and wishful thinking. The figure 4 may represent the entering in of a tinge of confession, a sense of unworthiness, undeservingness of the things that are being asked. The figure 5 may mark the first real sense of gratitude. Number 6 may represent the point in Christian experience where you appreciate and even request the prayers of others on your behalf. Let number 7 mark the Bethel experiences of prayer progress, where one discovers the two-way open thoroughfare from that point on the map where you thought God was not, to the very gate of Heaven. Here the first vow was registered. Number 8; well, have you ever enjoyed the rich experience of Peniel on the eve of your crossing the Jabbok to meet your outraged brother Esau who is coming to meet you with four hundred men, and you with all your property exposed to attack, and the responsibility of a large family wholly dependent on the outcome of that momentous approach? Well, not just all those details, but something like that. And you wrestled with God and prevailed. Perhaps number 9 represents the point in prayer expertness where one walks and talks with God daily, or should we say, *converses*? For God talks with him also. Audibly? Not necessarily. "They

that were with me beheld indeed the light, but they heard not the voice of him that spake with me." Number 10, Gethsemane, in the Lincolnian sense; not the Messianic, perhaps; "driven to my knees because there was no place else to go." Number 11 represents that complete surrender of the will where one is willing not only to suffer, but even to die, if that be the will of God. The figure 12 may represent that point of development in the prayer life where testimony of what the Lord has done not only breaks forth unashamed, but is irrepressible. Figure 13 is the privilege of those high in influence and power, kings and presidents and all in authority whether civil or spiritual; they may call on the multitudes and even the nations to fast, to pray, to give thanks. King David often did it, and his proclamations became Psalms. At least nine times Lincoln called the nation to its knees, and some of these calls were classics, too. Number 14 is a state of mind, Oh how rare! "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do." "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." Number 15—well, you may want to rearrange the whole dial to fit your own experience, and you may need more figures to express all that prayer means to you—God grant it may be so—but save that last figure whatever it be for this: "Into Thy hand I commend my spirit."—Total surrender.

Now let us keep that dial in mind as we read further into the story of Abraham Lincoln, and



watch the register rise. But first of all, step onto the scales yourself. How much do you weigh? Now Mr. Lincoln, we are ready for you. The pointer is already in the teens. It will go higher.

Emil Ludwig has written an excellent work on *Lincoln* in German, excellent except that he keeps insisting on calling Lincoln a skeptic. For instance immediately after quoting some of Lincoln's most religious passages in which he speaks of the promise "*made to his 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,*" this writer says: ". . . conviction of agreement with God's purpose—this being in his later years Lincoln's term for destiny. There is no evidence that he really believes in a personal God, or in the Son of God." No evidence? Herein is a marvelous thing that a man who never makes a public address and we might almost say, "or a private remark," without reference to a personal God, one who asks his individual callers and the whole nation to pray, one who makes promises to God and hears God speak to him, one who spends hours on his knees—"there is no evidence that he really believes in a personal God, or in the Son of God." God is just "his name for destiny." Listen, Herr Ludwig, if you have ears to hear.

That Lincoln was taught to pray in early childhood there can be no doubt. Whether he continued the habit through life without interruption

<sup>1</sup>Emil Ludwig, *Lincoln*, p. 180.

only the inaccessible records of the angels have the accurate facts. But we have his own statement that after he went to the White House he kept up the habit (note that word) of daily prayer. Sometimes it was only ten words, but those ten words he had. At another time he said to his friend Noah Brooks:

I should be the most presumptuous blockhead upon this footstool if I had for one day thought I could discharge the duties which have come upon me since I came into this place without the aid and enlightenment of One who is stronger and wiser than all others.<sup>2</sup>

“I will also speak of thy testimonies before kings, and shall not be put to shame.” So spake the Psalmist, probably Daniel in this Psalm (119: 46), a testimony to his own attainments in grace, and a promise which he fulfilled through at least three dynasties. Lincoln had some of that grace given to him.

I have always taken counsel of Him, and referred to Him my plans, and have never adopted a course of proceeding without being assured, as far as I could be, of His approbation.<sup>3</sup>

At another time he said:

Amid the greatest difficulties of my administration, when I could not see any other resort, I would place my whole reliance in God, knowing all would go well and that He would decide for the right.

And again:

I have had so many 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.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Noah Brooks, Harper's Magazine, Vol. XXXI, p. 226.

<sup>3</sup>Johnstone, How Lincoln Prayed, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>Johnstone, How Lincoln Prayed, p. 8.

In replying to some of the ministers of the Christian Commission that waited upon him, he speaks boldly of what prayer has meant through the trying days of his troubled administration:

If it were not for my firm belief in an overruling Providence, it would be difficult for me, in the midst of such complications of affairs, to keep my reason on its seat. But I am confident that the Almighty has His plans, and will work them out; and, whether we see it or not, they will be the best for us. I have always taken counsel of Him, and referred to Him my plans, and have never adopted a course of proceeding without being assured, as far as I could be, of His approbation. To be sure, He has not conformed to my desires, or else we should have been out of our trouble long ago. On the other hand, His will does not seem to agree with the wish of our enemy over there (pointing across the Potomac). He stands the Judge between us, and we ought to be willing to accept His decisions. We have reason to anticipate that it will be favorable to us, for our cause is right.<sup>5</sup>

Are these the words of that man who "does not believe in a personal God or in the Son of God"?

That Mr. Lincoln wrote and spoke some of the finest gems of all uninspired literature, there is no disputing. His Gettysburg Address will be found inscribed in the most carefully selected anthologies, and the Second Inaugural Address is not less worthy to rank with the best. Of it the *London Times* said: "It is the most remarkable thing of the sort ever pronounced by a President of the United States from the first day until now. Its Alpha and Omega is Almighty God, the God of Justice and the Father of Mercies, who is working out the purposes of His love." Other

<sup>5</sup>J. G. Holland, *Life of Lincoln*, p. 440.

passages of the President shine because of their keen logic, their common sense, their telling homespun parables. From whence did this son of the frontier, never having gone even to a secondary school, get this wisdom? Perhaps the following paragraphs from the man himself will throw some light on that question:

When I set my mind at work to find some way of evading or declining a journey, a speech or service, instead of my own spirit a something stronger says: "You must go. You must not disappoint these people, who have given you their confidence as they have no other man."

I am a full believer that God knows what He wants a man to do, that which pleases Him. It is never well with the man who heeds it not. I talk to God. My mind seems relieved when I do, and a way is suggested, that if it is not a supernatural one, it is always one that comes at a time, and accords with a common sense view of the work. . . . I take up the common one of making a speech somewhere or other. These come along almost every day. I get ready for them as occasion seems to require. I arrange the facts, make a few notes, some little memorandums like these you have seen so often and are so familiar with. I take them, and as far as facts are concerned, confine myself to them and rarely make any particular preparation for feeling, sympathy, or purely sentimental thought.

When my plans for the discussion are made, and the foundations are laid, I find that I am done and all at sea unless I arouse myself to the spirit and merits of my cause. With my mind directed to the necessity, I catch the fire of it, the spirit of the inspiration. I see it reflected in the open faces and throbbing hearts before me. This impulse comes and goes, and again returns and seems to take possession of me. The influence, whatever it is, has taken effect. It is contagious; the people fall into the

stream and follow me in the inspiration, or what is beyond my understanding. This seems evidence to me, a weak man, that God Himself is leading the way.<sup>6</sup>

At a meeting of the Sanitary Commission at the White House, Dr. John D. Hill, a skilled physician of Buffalo, New York, was congratulating the President on his gigantic plan for the care of the disabled soldiers, the sick and wounded. Lincoln replied:

You must carry your thanks to a Higher Being. One stormy night I tossed on my bed, unable to sleep as I thought of the terrible sufferings of our soldiers and sailors. I spent an hour in agonizing prayer to God for some method of relief, and He put the Sanitary Commission in my mind, with all its details, as distinctly as though the instructions had been written out by pen and handed to me. Hereafter, always thank your Heavenly Father, and not me, for this organization which has eased so much pain and saved so many lives.<sup>7</sup>

No, Brother Ludwig, we will not even try to substitute the word *Destiny* for the name of God in Mr. Lincoln's reverent speeches. Even the suggestion is nauseating.

<sup>6</sup>Browne, Vol. 2, p. 194.

<sup>7</sup>The New York Globe, February 13, 1911.

## CHAPTER XXX

### HELPERS TOGETHER IN PRAYER

“. . . but I have prayed for you.” How those words of his Master must have rung in the ears of Peter from that last night before the crucifixion until he was permitted by his Lord to cancel his triple denial by a triple reaffirmation of his unfailing love! John, too, was impressed, for after six decades he wrote: “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.” And the writer to the Hebrews, hearing of Peter’s experience, wrote: “Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us.” Saved by the intercession of our Intercessor.

But there is a place for human intercession also—a very important place. “No man cometh unto the Father but by me (Christ).” But “pray one for another.” “We . . . do not cease to pray for you . . .” “Pray for us.” Christ is the metallic circuit of the electric current with an open gap that must be closed by throwing a switch; then the power goes through. Human intercession bridges the gap that the power that proceeds from God through Jesus Christ may pass on to perform its work. Whether you like that simile or not, have there not been times when you found great comfort in knowing that some one was praying for you?

Lincoln passed through deep waters,—waters so deep that he was termed “the man of sorrows,” without thought of blasphemy. According to his own testimony it was only the knoweldge that multitudes were praying for him that enabled him to stay at his post of duty and to keep his reason in its seat. When on February 20, 1862, the death of his son Willie overwhelmed his already overburdened soul, he remembered: “I had a good Christian mother, and I remember her prayers. They have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life.” When Mrs. Pomeroy, on the morning of the funeral, assured him that the people were praying for him, he said: “I am glad to hear that. I want them to pray for me. I need their prayers. I will try to go to God with my sorrows.”<sup>1</sup>

When a few weeks later, the Rev. N. W. Miner, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Springfield, Illinois, with his wife, visited the still sad and dejected parents, Mr. Miner comforted him by saying: “Well, Mr. Lincoln, you have this encouragement: Christian people over the country are praying for you as they never prayed for mortal man before.” He replied: “I believe that, and this has been an encouraging thought for me. If I were not sustained by the prayers of God’s people, I could not endure the constant pressure. I should give up hoping for success.” The conversation continued:

“Do you think judging from your standpoint, that we shall be able to put down the rebellion?”

<sup>1</sup>Lincoln Scrapbook, Library of Congress, p. 48.

“You know I am not of a very hopeful temperament. I can take hold of a thing and hold on a good while. By trusting God for help, and believing that our cause is just and right, I firmly believe we shall conquer in the end.” Later in the conversation he said :

“I would gladly, if I could, take my neck from under the yoke, and go home with you to Springfield, and live as I used, in peace with my friends, rather than endure this harassing kind of a life. But it has pleased Almighty God to place me in my present position, and looking to Him for wisdom and divine guidance, I must work out my destiny as best I can.”<sup>2</sup>

Now it is September 28, 1862, six days after the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. A deputation from the Society of Friends headed by Mrs. Eliza P. Gurney is calling upon the President to assure him of their support, their sympathy, and their prayers. Mr. Lincoln responded in these words :

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 been allowed my way, this war would have been ended before this; but we find it

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 52.



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.<sup>3</sup>

Four days after the official Emancipation Proclamation, January 5, 1863, in replying to a letter, Mr. Lincoln again speaks in appreciation of the people's prayers for him:

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.<sup>4</sup>

Another year passes; it is January 1864, and the clouds are still hanging heavy over this melancholy man, naturally given to melancholy, but far more so by reason of the great loss of life, the divided state of the country, and the disunity and dissatisfaction of the people in the North. The Sanitary Commission has just closed a four days session in Washington, and some fifty ladies went together to call on the President. The usual proc-

<sup>3</sup>Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

ess of hand-shaking was taking place, but the little old Quaker lady from Philadelphia would not miss this chance to administer cold water to a thirsty soul, and to leave an apple of gold in the net-work of silver: "Yes, Friend Abraham, thee needs not think thee stands alone. We are praying for thee. All our hearts, the hearts of all the people are behind thee, and thee *cannot* fail! The Lord has appointed thee, the Lord will sustain thee, and the people love thee. Yes, as no other man was ever loved before does this people love thee. We are only a few weak women, but we represent many. Take comfort, Friend Abraham, God is with thee. The people are behind thee."

Lincoln's reply came from trembling lips:

I know it. I know it. If I did not have that knowledge—it is not hope, it is knowledge, the knowledge that God is sustaining and will sustain me until my appointed work is done—I could not live. If I did not believe that the hearts of loyal people were with me, I could not endure it. My heart would have broken long ago. It is that blessed knowledge and that blessed belief that holds me to my work. This has been a bad day, and I was almost overwhelmed when you came in. You have given a cup of cold water to a very thirsty and grateful man. Ladies, you have done me a great kindness today. I knew it before. I knew that good men and women were praying for me, but I was so tired I had almost forgotten. God bless you all.<sup>5</sup>

It is little wonder that President Lincoln loved and respected these Quakers. They hated war, but they hated slavery even worse, and they gave the President many a proof of their loyalty and their prayers. The President writes to Mrs. Eliza

<sup>5</sup>Helen Everston Smith, *The Independent*, 1900, p. 435.

P. Gurney mentioned above under the date of September 4, 1864, who was then in London—she was the wife of a wealthy banker:

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.<sup>6</sup>

Mr. L. E. Chittendon, Register of the Treasury under Lincoln, says: "Lincoln's calm serenity at times when others were so anxious, his confidence that his own judgment was directed by the Al-

<sup>6</sup>Nicolay and Hay, Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln.

mighty, so impressed me that I ventured to ask him directly how far he believed the Almighty actually directed our national affairs. After a considerable pause Lincoln spoke as follows:

That the Almighty God does make use of human agencies, and directly intervenes in human affairs, is one of the plainest statements in the Bible. I have had so many 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.

As the conversation proceeded, Lincoln based his argument for the certainty of divine guidance on the Bible, a witness whose general story has always proved true. Chittendon then interposed, "If your views are correct, the Almighty is on our side, and we ought to win without so many losses . . ." To this Lincoln replied:

We have no right to criticize or complain. He is on our side, and so is the Bible, and so are the churches and Christian societies and organizations—all of them, so far as I know, almost without an exception. It makes me stronger and more confident to know that all the Christians in the loyal States are praying for our success, and 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 a long spell 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 on obeying His orders and executing His will.<sup>7</sup>

While the above incidents are given to show how much President Lincoln was helped by his faith in the prayers of the people for him, most of the quotations cited also show how strong is his faith that God is sovereign in all the affairs of men, and that His withholding victory is not because He was not able to give it, but because the people were not yet ready for it, and it was not according to His plan. In his faith, he was Calvinistic, as will be shown later. These quotations tell us too, that President Lincoln's frequent calls for days of fasting, prayer, and thanksgiving were not mere gestures to win popular or even divine favor. They were the signals of distress or thankful acknowledgements sincerely offered to the only One who could bring about victory.

<sup>7</sup>L. E. Chittenden, *Recollections*, pp. 448-450.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S CREED

If church creeds were thoroughly taught and strictly enforced it would be a relatively easy matter to classify folks as to what they believe. But in recent years, especially (perhaps it was always so), there are those so-called keepers of the fold who glory in how wide they have opened the door for any who wish to enter. No need for the thief and the robber to climb up some other way when the hedge is all broken down. And even where restrictions are still enforced, the man with the gold ring and goodly apparel is likely to be accorded a more abundant entrance unto the assembly of the saints as well as a wider choice of seats than the poor man in vile raiment and who is destitute of daily food. Dr. William E. Barton says: "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."

But there lies the difficulty: what sentiments did he profess who made no "profession." From the atheist, spiritualist, Unitarian, and Universal-

ist to the Methodist, Baptist, Quaker, and Presbyterian, yes, and even the Roman Catholic church, all have unofficially filed their claims and attempted to substantiate them, though not with equal success. Had Lincoln been less important than he was, the world would "little note or long remember" what he said or thought about religion, but this is the very focal point of much that has been written about Lincoln.

Such contradictory claims have been made concerning his beliefs that the easy way out seems to be to say that he had no creed. No creed? As well say that this man who could lift the barrel of whiskey and drink from the bunghole, or hold an ax horizontally by the helve held between thumb and fingers, had no ossified tissue, as to say that the one whom Stanton described as "the most perfect ruler of men" and who guided the Ship of State through the stormiest period of our history, had no creed. For what is a creed, but the ossified tissue of the soul, the beliefs, the principles, the inflexible bones of character that give it shape, and rigidity, and power, and beauty? But creeds, like skeletons, are hidden things, most beautiful when well adorned with flesh and blood, manifesting themselves in gracefully co-ordinated action.

Formulated creeds serve to clarify and to standardize our beliefs. Even as the well formed human body has a standardized skeleton of some two hundred bones, fashioned by an all-wise Creator, so is a well-rounded faith made up of certain standard affirmations. To lack the essential ones

leads to deformed faith and lop-sided conduct and character. To have them all functioning in proper proportion is to have the beauty of the Lord put upon us. Lincoln thought church creeds had too many articles; they should be reduced to two, to love God and your neighbor. But his own creed was much larger than that. Just how much larger, is the question now before us.

Two different Presbyterian ministers, Dr. Gurley and Dr. Smith, both learned and sound in the faith, and each believing himself to be thoroughly acquainted with Mr. Lincoln's opinions, were on the verge as they supposed of receiving him into their respective congregations, on dates separated by a number of years. They believed him to be "sound in the faith" and to them this meant that he believed in one God who is "a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. There are three persons in the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three are one God, same in substance, equal in power and glory." That Lincoln did accept these truths, at least in his later years, there is sufficient evidence to prove beyond reasonable doubt, except for that one voice of his law partner who says that he heard Lincoln deny such belief a thousand times. Let us suspend his judgment for the present.

But to "believe in God" may mean infinitely much, or it may mean infinitesimally little; God may be a mere word, stale, flat, and unprofitable, or it may represent the unsearchable riches of wisdom, knowledge and love. The creed is a



matter of the heart, not of the head. To a Conference on Limitation of Armaments there came a swarthy Mohammedan, tall, finely featured, white turbaned, a nobleman of India. About his neck he wore a necklace whose beads he pushed separately and reverently on the string, his lips moving, but with no audible sound. The curiosity of at least one American was aroused to ask the significance of the "string of beads."

"String? This is not a string. This is a golden cord which binds my soul to my Allah god. And these are not beads. They are gems, gems of glory. They are jewels, jewels of joy. They are pearls, pearls of paradise. This is my Rosary. Each one of these gems, jewels, pearls, ninety-nine of them in all on this cord of gold, represent the ninety-nine beautiful names of Allah, the god of the Koran, the holy book of my religion, and I was worshiping my Allah God, calling upon him by every one of his ninety-nine beautiful names by which he is known in the Koran. I challenge you as a Christian to match my Rosary. I have a better acquaintance with my Allah than you have with your Christ. I know my Allah by his full name, and I challenge you to match me gem for gem, jewel for jewel, pearl for pearl."

Dr. Clinton N. Howard, for it was he, went away abashed and ashamed that he could only meet the challenge with speechlessness, but determined that he would never fail to meet such a challenge in the future. Searching his Bible, he found not ninety-nine, but two hundred names for God, and treasured them up in his heart.

Two hundred names for God! Each incomplete in itself, yet representing some facet of God's personality. It is as if there had been placed in our hands two hundred colored transparencies which we may superimpose one upon another until we build up just that shade of color which exactly fits our need at the moment. Or conversely, by testing our own vocabulary, we may learn just how far we have advanced in our conception of God, and on which of His attributes and prerogatives we lay special emphasis. It takes them all to comprehend and apprehend God.

In referring to Deity, Mr. Lincoln used at least forty-nine designations in the quotations attributed to him, but not all of them are Biblical terms. The following list, arranged alphabetically, was compiled by the Rev. W. J. Johnstone, but some of these are taken from quoted conversations, not from written documents. The name *Jesus* occurs once and the name *Christ* once, and each is taken from quotations whose authenticity has been questioned. But he did not hesitate to use the name *Saviour* and to speak of the *Son of God*. Of course, this does not represent Lincoln's complete vocabulary. The list follows:

Almighty, Almighty Architect, Almighty Arm, Almighty Father, Almighty God, Almighty Hand, Almighty Power, Almighty Ruler of Nations,

Christ, Creator, Crucified One,

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,

Jesus, Judge, Just,

Lord,

Maker, Maker of the Universe, Master, Most High, Most High God,

Omniscient Mind,

Power, Providence,

Ruler of Universe,

Saviour, Son, Son of God, Son of Mary, Supreme Being.<sup>1</sup>

In the above list the name *Holy Spirit* occurs once, just once. But in the document where it occurs, the Thanksgiving Proclamation of July 15, 1863, it is no mere casual or formal mention that He receives, but the whole passage shows how well Lincoln understood the whole work of the Holy Spirit. He understood the third person of the Trinity, as He is usually designated, to be the executive power of the Godhead. He asks the nation to invoke His influence to subdue anger, change hearts, guide counsels, give wisdom, visit with tender care and consolation, and lead the nation, through the paths of repentance and submission to the Divine Will, back to the perfect enjoyment of peace. And all this in an official document of the Chief Executive of the United States! But he was speaking from his own experience. These were the things the Holy Spirit had done for him, chosen him to the office, counseled him, consoled him, directed him. A paragraph of the document is here quoted:

Now, therefore, be it known that I do set apart Thurs-

<sup>1</sup>Lincoln, the Christian, p. 215.

day, 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.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Erwin Chapman in his "*Latest Light on Abraham Lincoln*" has made the following summary of things for which Lincoln requested the people of the nation to pray in his many proclamations:

That we may be spared further punishment  
That our armies may be blessed and made effectual  
That law and order and peace may be re-established  
That prayers may bring down plentiful blessings  
For pardon of national sins  
That by the influence of the Holy Spirit the anger of the insurgents may be subdued  
That the hearts of the insurgents may be changed  
To visit with tender care and consolation those who suffer in mind, body or estate  
To lead the whole nation to union and fraternal peace  
To protect soldiers and other leaders

<sup>2</sup>Nicolay and Hay, Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln.

To comfort the sick, wounded and prisoners  
To bring blessings for the orphans and widows  
To uphold the government  
To heal the wounds of the nation  
To bring peace, harmony, tranquility and union  
To have compassion and grant forgiveness  
To suppress the rebellion  
To establish the supremacy of the Constitution and laws  
To protect from foreign hostility and interference  
To keep us from obstinate adherence to our own coun-  
sels

To enlighten the mind of the nation to know and to do  
His will

To maintain our place as a nation  
To grant courage, power, resistance and endurance  
To soften the hearts, enlighten the minds and quicken  
the consciences of those in rebellion

To cause the insurgents to lay down their arms and  
return to their allegiance to the United States

To stay the effusion of blood

To restore fraternity, union, and peace

A consideration of these objects for which President  
Lincoln requested the people to pray will convince any  
candid mind that he was a firm, unquestioning believer  
in the power of prayer, and in the influences of the Holy  
Spirit upon the hearts and minds of men, and in de-  
termining the events of life.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>p. 337.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### LINCOLN'S PHILOSOPHY, FATALIST OR CALVINIST?

From the list of names by which Lincoln designated God in his official papers and private conversation, it is very evident that his mind dwelt much on the sovereignty of God. Note these: "Almighty", "Almighty Architect", "Almighty Arm", "Almighty Father", "Almighty God", "God Almighty", "Almighty Hand", "Almighty Power", "Almighty Ruler of Nations", "Disposer", "Divine Will", "Divine Providence", "God of Battles", "God of Hosts", "God of Nations", "Ruler of the Universe", "Governor", "Supreme Being." Like that prophet who "saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up," he perceived Him as one to whom the nations are as a drop of a bucket and are counted as the small dust of the balance, who taketh up the isles as a very little thing.

It is notable too, that Lincoln connected certain ideas with these omnipotent names for God; he spoke often of God's will, His purposes, His plans, and His times. Given an omnipotent God, with a will, a purpose, and a plan with a time schedule, and what have you? One must accept one of three philosophies of life: Fatalism, as exemplified in Mohammedanism; Scientific Determinism; or the philosophy which is commonly and mistakenly called Calvinism, but which is at least as old as Moses. Which of these did Lincoln accept?

A caricature is an artist's (?) sketch in which prominent features are further exaggerated, weak ones are made still weaker. The cartoonist does this intentionally, the poor artist does it inadvertently, the biographer does it in spite of himself. The real artist is apt to do it in his first outline; then recognizing his exaggeration, tones it down.

Let Mr. Herndon present his sketch of Lincoln's philosophy, which is undoubtedly, though unintentionally, a caricature. Here is one of several letters of Herndon to Weik and others in which he says practically the same to each—repetition doesn't make a thing true, but it often makes the repeater, and sometimes the hearer, believe it is true.

I want this to go in our book, at least in substance. Mr. Lincoln's philosophy was as follows: First, he believed that what was to be would be and that no prayers of ours could arrest or reverse the decree. Secondly, he was a fatalist and believed that fatalism ruled the world. Thirdly, he believed that conditions made and do make and will forever continue to make the man and not man the conditions. Fourthly, he believed that there was no freedom of the human mind; and, fifthly, he believed that universal, absolute, and eternal laws ruled the universe of matter and of mind, everywhere and always. Mr. Lincoln also contended that motives moved the man to every voluntary act of his life. If the above was Lincoln's philosophy or a part of it, then many acts of his life may be justly interpreted and the man better understood by it. Lincoln's patience sprang from his philosophy; his calm quiet waiting on the events of the times, his coolness, calmness under the times of terrible bloody war, his charity for men and his want of malice for them everywhere, all grew out of his peculiar philosophy. Lincoln neither loved nor hated, never admired, and

never censured, never eulogized and never condemned man. I speak of Lincoln's general nature. Is this true, and, if so, why is it true? Men had no free choice; things were to be, and they came, irresistibly came, doomed to come; men were made as they are made by superior conditions over which they had no control; the fates settled things as by the doom of the powers, and laws, universal, absolute, and eternal, ruled the universe of matter and of mind. Men were but simple tools of fate, of conditions, and of laws, and to praise men on the one hand or censure them on the other was in the abstract wrong in principle at all times. The thing, the event, was to be just as it had come, and no right and no wrong and no virtue and no vice should in truth be attached to it. The man, the people, but obeyed their superiors. The man, the people, and the whole race are made by forces, conditions, environments, around them, set in motion a million years or more ago, sweeping swiftly around the universe every instant of time, never flagging, ever onward. . . .

Man is compelled to feel, think, will, and to act subject to the influence of these conditions; he, man, is a mere child moved and made by this vast world machine, working in grooves and moving in deep-cut channels forever and forever; and now what is man? He is simply a *simple tool*, a mere cog in one wheel, a part, a small part, of this vast iron machine that strikes and cuts, grinds and mashes, all things, including man, that resist it. Events, the fates, decreed them, and what they decree is irresistible and inevitable, and *no prayers* of ours can arrest or reverse the decree. What a man is, he is because of the conditions of the universe and is entitled to no credit and should have no blame attached to him for the deed. If a man did Lincoln a grievous wrong, the man was a mere tool, and did but obey his superiors. If the man did him a good, he but obeyed the powers and should not suffer for the wrong nor (be) praised nor paid for the right. The man was compelled, driven, to do what he did do. It was to be and had come. If a man



was good or bad, small or great, successful or unsuccessful, filled with virtue or overflowing with vice, and if war, pestilence, or famine stalked abroad over the land, it all was doomed from the beginning. Lincoln was patient and calmly waited on events; he knew they would come, because cause and effect, antecedents and consequents, are ever in action following laws. Every event in the universe was preceded by some prior cause and gave guarantee of some subsequent event flowing therefrom. It is possible that Lincoln did not fully believe that Brutus was specially made to kill Caesar in the Senate Chamber of Rome with a dagger and that Caesar was specially made to be killed by Brutus; and yet he would believe, because it is true, that both Brutus and Caesar were forced by conditions over which they had no control, into the inevitable paths and center of forces that destroyed Caesar and made in one short moment a criminal of Brutus and a murderer.<sup>1</sup>

Before closing the above letter, Herndon says: "This is all that I propose to say about Lincoln's philosophy or his religion; it is a good condensation of all that I have said to you on that subject; and all that it is necessary to say." That remark suggests that there was more he might have said. For instance, he might have said that this philosophy was a combination of fatalism plus so called "scientific determinism" and have traced each to its source. The fatalism, for instance, is Herndon's own interpretation of Lincoln's Calvinism, for Herndon was not sufficiently religious to understand Calvinism, or to distinguish it from fatalism. That Lincoln was reared in a Calvinistic atmosphere is shown by the first five of the eleven "articles of faith" which are given here, copied from the Record Book of Pigeon Creek

<sup>1</sup>Emanuel Hertz, *The Hidden Lincoln*, p. 179-181.

## Baptist Church :

### ARTICLES OF FAITH

1st. we believe in one god the Father the word & the holly gost who haith created all things that are created by the word of his power for his pleasure.

2nd. we believe the old & new testaments are the words of god thare are every thing contained thare in necessary For our Salvation & rule of faith and practice.

3'. we believe in the fall of man in his public hear & That he is Incapable of recovery unless restorred by Christ.

4'. we believe in Election by grace given us in Christ Jesus Before the world began & that God Cawls regenerates and Sanctifies all who are made meat for Glory by his special grace.

5'. we believe the righteous will persevere throw grace to glory & none of them fineley fawl away.<sup>2</sup>

In his later life he sat at the feet of two strong Presbyterian ministers, Dr. James Smith and Dr. Gurley, both of whom seem to have satisfied his longing soul with the strong meat of Calvinistic vitamins A, B, C, D, E, and G. But it is not on such external evidence that his belief in Calvinism is affirmed, but on the internal evidence of his written words, some of which will be cited later.

But if Herndon had been analyzing his philosophy, he would have traced his "scientific determinism" to "The Vestiges of Creation" by Chambers, a book which he claims had a great part in forming Lincoln's philosophy. The letter here quoted is dated August 21, 1877 :

Mrs. Lincoln told me in 1866 . . . that Mr. Lincoln's philosophy was "what is to be will be, and no cares (Herndon here inserts "prayers" in parenthesis which is

<sup>2</sup>The National Republican, October 15, 1921.

the way he quotes it on numerous other occasions; it suits his purpose better) of ours can arrest or reverse the decree." . . . Mr. Lincoln borrowed of James W. Keys and read, thoroughly read and studied, *The Vestiges of Creation*. . . . Mr. Lincoln on reading and studying the book became, and was for years, a firm believer in the theory of development (evolution) as presented in *The Vestiges of Creation*. Mr. Lincoln's speeches will show his unbounded faith in the theory of development. . . . He soon grew into a belief in a universal law, evolution, and from this he has never deviated. Mr. Lincoln became a firm believer in evolution and of law. Of the truth of this there is no doubt and can be none. Mr. Lincoln believed in laws that imperiously ruled both matter and mind. With him there could be no miracles outside of law; he held that the universe was a grand mystery and a miracle. Nothing to him was lawless, everything being governed by law. There were no accidents in his philosophy. Every event had its cause. The past to him was the cause of the present and the present including the past will be the cause of the grand future and all are one, links in the endless chain, stretching from the infinite to the finite. Everything to him was the result of the forces of Nature, playing on matter and mind from the beginning of time and will to the end of it, play on matter and mind giving the world other, further, and grander results. What gave Mr. Lincoln such profound conviction of the progress of man and the power of truth? He said in his Cooper Institute speech: "Let us have faith that right makes might and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it."<sup>3</sup>

Whether Mr. Lincoln believed in evolution or no, Mr. Herndon, being his law partner for a number of years, certainly had a most advantageous position to know, and when he didn't know, to dogmatize; an advantage he did not entirely

<sup>3</sup>Emanuel Hertz, *The Hidden Lincoln*, pp. 406, 407.

neglect to use. He says above: "Mr. Lincoln's speeches will show his unbounded faith in the theory of development." Then why does he make such a weak selection to prove this point? The quotation from the Cooper Institute speech proves nothing of the kind, nor any of the several quotations in the remaining paragraphs of this letter which is here further quoted:

Again he said and said often and often that, though the Declaration of Independence at that time, 1858, was not just yet a practiced fact here under all circumstances, and yet that it was a grand truth set up as a standard, an ideal standard, it may be, but to be ever worked for, struggled for and approached. . . . And again he said: "We (those who were against slavery) shall not fail; if we stand firm we shall not fail. Wise counsels may accelerate or mistakes delay it, but sooner or later the victory is sure to come." . . . Here and now Mr. Lincoln is advocating liberty and what a faith he has in the progress of man, in the right, in the final triumph and victory of freedom; he knows that all this will come about in God's own good time by His will worked out through evolution and through laws.

Mr. Lincoln firmly believed that conditions, circumstances, make the man and that man does not make the conditions. On this point he says this: "I attempt no compliment to my own sagacity. 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 desired or expected." Our prayers could not arrest nor reverse the decree, though we tried prayers. Again he says, in a speech in 1860 at Cincinnati: "I deem it due to myself and the whole country, in the present extraordinary condition of the country and of public opinion, that I should wait and see the last development of public opinion before I give my views of public opinion, or ex-

press myself at the time of the inauguration." Here is the theory of development, of evolution clearly stated. . . . Wise man—sagacious man. It follows logically that Mr. Lincoln did not believe, only in a limited sense if any, in the freedom of the human will. He has argued this question with me; he changed the expression and called it the freedom of the mind, instead of the freedom of the will. Mr. Lincoln said to me that motives ruled the man always and everywhere under the sun. I once contended that man could act without motive; he smiled at my philosophy and it was not soon before I saw as he saw. . . .<sup>4</sup>

Surely Mr. Herndon is grasping for a straw when he says Lincoln spoke of waiting to "see the last development of public opinion" and says: "Here is the theory of development, of evolution clearly stated." However, it should be said for Mr. Herndon that he did modify his statements later, for in writing to Weik under date of February 26, 1891 (nearly fourteen years after his statement given above) he says:

"I wish to say a word or two about Mr. Lincoln's fatalism. (He then repeats in very abbreviated form what he had said in other communications about Lincoln's belief that mind and matter are governed by irresistible and inevitable laws which no prayers can change.) "It follows that Mr. Lincoln was a fatalist, as he himself has said, though his fatalism was not of the extreme order like the Mohammedan idea of fate, because he believed firmly in the power of human effort to modify the environments which surround us. He made efforts at all times to modify and change public opinion and to climb to the Presidential

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 406-408.

heights; he toiled and struggled in this line as scarcely any man ever did. As to free will, he said that that which was governed by a force outside of itself was not self-governed and that which was not self-governed was not free, though he admitted that the will to a very limited extent, in some fields of operation, was somewhat free. The laws of the universe were, except as to human nature, *outside* of the will and governed it. The will, in addition, had to act along the lines of human nature, including the laws of motive, thus giving the will only a small field of action for the exercise of its freedom, so called.”<sup>5</sup>

Now, Mr. Herndon, you are beginning to talk sense. But that is a very, very long way from what you kept saying over and over, before. The Freedom of the Will makes the world of difference between Fatalism, Scientific Determinism, and Calvinism. When you have granted that Lincoln believed, as he certainly did believe, that every man and every nation is a free, moral, and responsible agent, you have conceded the entire question. He was not a fatalist, as himself declared.

Let us hear President Lincoln state his own philosophy. The Rev. Byron Sundeland, D.D. pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Washington, D.C. whose church Lincoln sometimes attended, took some of his friends to call on the President between the preliminary and final issue of the Emancipation Proclamation. Some ten years later he wrote an account of the visit to the

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 265-267.

Rev. J. A. Reed, telling how the President spoke for half an hour, pouring forth a volume of the deepest Christian philosophy he had ever heard, beginning thus :

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 backs down. And 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 of the nation prostrated in prayer that God will help them to destroy the Union and build up a government upon the corner stone 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 is 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 Republic. The times are dark, the spirits of ruin are abroad in all their power, and the mercy of God alone can save us.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Scribner's Monthly, July, 1873, p. 342.



## CHAPTER XXXIII

### HIS SYNTHETIC CALVINISM

How Calvinistic was Lincoln? "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." So says Dr. William E. Barton in his book, *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln*. Dr. Barton should have broadened his statement to say that almost the entire discussion of Lincoln's religion is an effort to prove that he was orthodox, but with the understanding that "orthodoxy is my doxy, and heterodoxy is your doxy." It is a long stretch from atheism to Calvinism, yet at every point along that road attempts have been made to corral Lincoln and brand him and claim ownership. Even the Free Masons have made their claim, for did he not speak of his soul's "Almighty Architect?" What need have we of further witnesses?

Almost equally well substantiated are the claims of the Unitarians. Herndon was an Abolitionist—caught the infection in the preparatory department of Illinois College, so that his father recalled the "abolitionist pup," terminating his college education and also friendly relations between father and son. Theodore Parker, apostle of Unitarianism in far off Massachusetts, was also an Abolitionist, and he and Herndon carried on a correspondence. Herndon had Parker's

books. Whether he caught his Unitarian infection from them, the record does not say, but at any rate he loaned them to Lincoln. In his letter written for Lamon's *Life of Lincoln* (p. 486) he says Lincoln's "theological opinions were substantially those expounded by Theodore Parker."

Jesse W. Fell, another intimate acquaintance of Lincoln's, was an admirer of Dr. W. E. Channing, the second member of the Unitarian triumvirate—Parker, Channing, and Waldo Emerson. Fell presented Lincoln with Channing's works, and in his letter written for Lamon's book, he says: "and though far from believing there was an entire harmony of views on his part with either of those authors (Parker or Channing), yet they were generally admired and approved by him."<sup>1</sup>

So far, the books that have been declared to have had a formative influence on Lincoln's life and philosophy are: in his youth, the *Bible*, *Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress*, *Aesop's Fables*, and *Weems' Life of Washington*; in his young manhood, *Paine's Age of Reason*, and *Volney's Ruins*, and some add *Voltaire*—these were the books that shook his faith. Smith's *The Christian's Defense* re-established his faith. To these are to be added *Chambers' Vestiges of Creation* and the works of Channing and Parker. What fellowship hath light with darkness, Christ with Belial, or the believer with the infidel? Let it be said, however, that few, if any, of this list of books questioned the existence of God; but some of them denied the

<sup>1</sup>Ward H. Lamon, *Life of Lincoln*, p. 491.

plain teachings of the Bible.

Played upon by these component forces, what was the resultant in Lincoln's philosophy? Let Dr. William E. Barton give his answer, for being a liberal theologian of the Congregational Church, he will not be charged with prejudice toward ultra-Calvinism. He says:

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.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup>

But while Dr. Barton speaks of Lincoln's "rigid Calvinism," yet in the following passages he gives the "too rigid" Calvinism of Dr. Smith as the reason why he did not unite with the church in Springfield as it was confidently expected he would.

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 requirements.<sup>4</sup>

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."*

<sup>2</sup>William E. Barton, *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 271.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 238.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 172.

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 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."<sup>5</sup>

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 free thinking 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; 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.<sup>6</sup>

Just what, Dr. Barton, is the distinction between the "Calvinism of the most rigid sort" in which as you say Mr. Lincoln did believe, and the "too rigid" Calvinism of Dr. Smith which you say he could not accept? Have you not confused us by making Predestinarianism synonymous with Calvinism? Mr. Lincoln accepted the one, but could "not quite see" Calvinism as a whole.

In other passages Mr. Barton speaks of Lincoln's Calvinism being too deep rooted to be eradicated, but on to this root he grafted the beliefs set forth in the works of Channing and Parker and in *Vestiges of Creation*. To quote:

For instance, the Calvinism which he inherited and heard through his childhood and which he accepted in a

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 257.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 258.

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.<sup>7</sup>

“Grafted on” is a well chosen simile; for the scripture tells us that before new branches can be grafted on, some of the natural branches will have to be broken off, for though we might wish that Lincoln had retained Calvinism in all its glory, we do find in his philosophy some of the natural branches gone from their place and wild olive branches in their places among the native branches, and with them partaking of the root and fatness of the Calvinistic tree. But of these later.

That Lincoln remained a Predestinarian to the end of his life, a few passages from his pen will amply demonstrate.

While still a bachelor, July 4, 1842, and after his first engagement to Mary Todd had been indefinitely postponed, he wrote to his friend Speed who had just recently been happily married:

I was always superstitious; I believe God made me one of the instruments of bringing Fanny and you together, which union I have no doubt He had foreordained. Whatever He designs He will do for me yet. “Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord” is my text just now.<sup>8</sup>

In the closing climax of his eulogy on Henry Clay in the State House at Springfield, July 16, 1852, he said:

Such a man the times have demanded, and such, in

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 254, 255.

<sup>8</sup>Nicolay and Hay, Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln.

the providence of God, was given us. But he is gone. Let us strive to deserve, as far as mortals may, the continued care of Divine Providence, trusting that in future national emergencies He will not fail to provide us the instruments of safety and security.<sup>9</sup>

Talking with his old friends of Springfield, Illinois, the Rev. N. W. Miner and wife, in April 1862, he said:

I would gladly, if I could, take my neck from under the yoke, and go home with you to Springfield, and live as I used, in peace with my friends, than to endure this harassing kind of life. But it has pleased Almighty God to place me in my present position, and, looking to Him for wisdom and divine guidance, I must work out my destiny as best I can.<sup>10</sup>

A group of men were discussing the probable outcome of the war, in June 1862. Former Senator James F. Wilson of Iowa, one of the group, says that the President sat quietly listening for a while. Then rising to his full six feet four, "his face aglow like the face of a prophet" he spoke his religious convictions:

My faith is greater than yours. I not only believe that Providence is not unmindful of the struggle in which this nation is engaged, that if we do not do right, God will let us go our own way to ruin; and that if we do right, He will lead us safely out of this wilderness, crown our arms with victory, and restore our dissevered union, as you have expressed your belief; but I also believe He will compel us to do right, in order that He may do these things, not so much because we desire them as that they accord with His plans of dealing with this nation, in the midst of which He means to establish justice. I think that He means that we shall do more than we have

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Lincoln Scrapbook, Library of Congress, p. 52.

yet done in the furtherance of His plans and He will open the way for our doing it. I have felt His hand upon me in great trials and submitted to His guidance, and I trust that as He shall farther open the way, I will be ready to walk therein, relying on His help and trusting in His goodness and wisdom.<sup>11</sup>

In the summer of 1864, Secretary Chase resigned his place in the Cabinet, and President Lincoln was high-pressuring the reluctant William P. Fessenden to succeed him. These were his words:

I believe that the suppression of the rebellion has been decreed by a higher power than any represented by us, and that the Almighty is using His own means to that end. You are one of them. It is as much your duty to accept as it is mine to appoint.<sup>12</sup>

But Lincoln's Calvinism, if we may call it such, blossoms out in its full glory in his Second Inaugural delivered March 4, 1865, about forty days before his death, than which few finer things have ever been written.

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 wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe 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—ferverently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speed-

<sup>11</sup>North American Review, December, 1896, p. 667.

<sup>12</sup>L. E. Chittenden, Recollections, p. 382.

ily 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 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."



## CHAPTER XXXIV

### LINCOLN'S CHRIST

“What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?” was Jesus’ final question to the Pharisees. “And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.” For this is the crucial question. Jesus put the same question in another form to His disciples to see whether they would give the flesh-and-blood answer, “John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, one of the prophets” or the Heaven-revealed answer, “Thou art the Christ the son of the living God.” The Cross is the Prime Meridian of orientation: on which side do you stand, with the scoffers or with the little group of disciples? Christ is the International Date Line, B.C. on the one side, A.D. on the other. Some keen observer has pointed out that all written languages east of Palestine read from right to left, all western languages read from left to right: we all read toward the cross. All things center about HIM—“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me”—the Center of Gravitation.

Where did Lincoln stand on this vital question? It is unfortunate that Lincoln’s life was so tangled up with that of Herndon that we must put him on the witness stand on every question concerning Lincoln, if only for the purpose of refuting his testimony. It is doubly unfortunate that the wit-

ness is so prejudiced in favor of his own religious views that he could only think of Lincoln's religion as coinciding with his own. And it is triply unfortunate that on account of his nearness to Lincoln in his law partnership, the weight of his testimony, in spite of his known prejudice, is very hard to counter-balance. Will the witness take the stand and be sworn?

The following statements are from Herndon's letter quoted in Lamon's *Life of Abraham Lincoln* (pp. 492-497) :

When Mr. Lincoln was a candidate for our legislature, he was accused of being an infidel, and of having said that Jesus Christ was an illegitimate child: he never denied his opinions, nor flinched from his religious views.

. . . he did not believe in a special creation . . . he did not believe that the Bible was a special revelation . . . did not believe in miracles . . . did not believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, as the Christian world contends.

I do not remember ever seeing the words *Jesus* or *Christ* in print, as uttered by Mr. Lincoln. If he used these words, they can be found. He uses the word *God* but seldom. I never heard him use the word *Christ* but to confute the idea that he was *the Christ*, the only and truly begotten Son of God, as the Christian world understands it. The idea that Mr. Lincoln carried the New Testament or Bible in his bosom or boots, to draw on his opponent in debate, is ridiculous.

Replying to this last paragraph, Dr. William E. Barton states that he has found the name *Jesus* "in his writings but I confess that I have not found it frequently in any which I count to be certainly genuine. There are, however, a number of references to *Jesus Christ* in his writings and published addresses, and they are both positive

and reverent." The use or non-use of particular words may be merely accidental, or may reveal the entire creed of the user. Lincoln did use occasionally the words *Jesus* and *Christ*, and if on other occasions he chose to use such words as "the Son of God", "the Crucified One", "Saviour", "Lord", does it not indicate a deeper religious experience, rather than a fear of committing himself as a believer. A few examples may make this clear:

To "Father" Chiniquy:

There is nothing as great under heaven as to be an ambassador of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

To Judge Joseph Gillespie in January 1861, while anxiously and helplessly watching the treacherous weakness of the retiring Buchanan administration permitting, not to say encouraging, the secession of the Southern States:

I see the duty devolving upon me. I have read, upon my knees, the story of Gethsemane, where the Son of God prayed in vain that the cup of bitterness might pass from Him.<sup>2</sup>

In reply to Douglas at Chicago, July 10, 1858:

It is said in one of the admonitions of our Lord, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The Saviour, I suppose, did not expect that any human creature could be perfect as the Father in heaven; but He said, "As your Father in heaven is perfect, be ye also perfect." He set up the standard, and He who did most toward reaching that standard, attained the highest degree of moral perfection.

To the colored people of Baltimore who had presented him with a gold mounted Bible:

<sup>1</sup>C. Chiniquy, *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*, p. 693.

<sup>2</sup>Henry C. Whitney, *Lincoln the Citizen*, p. 202

In regard to the Great Book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to men. All the good Saviour gave to the world is communicated through this Book.<sup>3</sup>

Most quotations from Lincoln are open to the objection that they are memory quotations from those who heard him speak them, which, of course, does not prove them false, but only less reliable. For instance, in the conversation which passed between Lincoln and Newton Bateman just before Lincoln's first election to the Presidency, discussed in a previous chapter, Lincoln was quoted as having said, "I know that I am right, because I know that liberty is right, for Christ teaches it, and Christ is God." In 1865, J. G. Holland published his *Life of Lincoln* in which he related this story which he had learned directly from Bateman. Herndon, on reading the story went directly to Bateman and insisted that he deny that Lincoln ever said, "Christ is God." Whether Bateman, occupying a political position, —Superintendent of Public Instruction—wanted to keep out of disputes, or whether, as he said, such controversies were distasteful to him, or whether he felt he had overstated the matter, he remained non-committal so far as the public was concerned. To recede from the published account, he must either take the blame himself for misquoting Lincoln, now deceased, or lay the blame on Holland for having misquoted the interview with Bateman, or call in question Mr. Herndon who on purely *a priori* grounds was absolutely sure that Lincoln never said it. For more than a year Herndon kept up these periodi-

<sup>3</sup>Nicolay and Hay, Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln.

cal interviews, and then published this statement:

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.<sup>4</sup>

Bateman held his peace, although some years afterward he said that Holland's story was "substantially correct." He later became the president of Knox College and lectured on Abraham Lincoln, but seems to have steered away from this dangerous rock, the scene of such unpleasant experiences with Herndon. All of which leads Dr. Barton to think that he admitted someone had blundered, but then Dr. Barton was not a stickler for strict orthodoxy.

When Bateman did "remove the seal of secrecy" from his confidential letter to Herndon, the startling admission was this:

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

<sup>4</sup>Lamon, *Life of Lincoln*, p. 496.

ism, during the whole conversation, and I don't suppose or believe he had.<sup>5</sup>

As to Lincoln's belief in the Virgin birth of Jesus Christ, there is no one who is able to bring forth a written signed statement of Lincoln on either side. Herndon says he didn't believe in it but doesn't even quote from memory statements to prove it, so far as the writer knows. Herndon lauds Lincoln's honesty to the nth degree but doesn't seem to have been overburdened with that virtue himself. Lamson quotes a number of letters to prove Lincoln's infidelity, letters which were undoubtedly sold to him by Herndon, two at least of which were little less than forgeries. The alleged writers had been familiarly interviewed, then from the interviews, such material as suited the interviewer was pieced together and signed with their names. John T. Stuart and James H. Matheny repudiated over their own signatures both the words and the ideas attributed to them. They were quoted directly contrary to their beliefs. (See *Scribner's Monthly*, July 1873, article by the Rev. James A. Reed.) Lamson also quotes a third letter from I. W. Keys. If we make even a little allowance for Mr. Keys misquoting Lincoln and for Herndon misquoting Keys, there is little left on which to base an argument for Lincoln's unbelief.

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

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 490.

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.)

Take that last sentence and place it along side Lincoln's advice to Speed, former close friend and fellow-doubter with Lincoln, and are we not justified in drawing the conclusion that Mr. Lincoln had advanced to the very basis of faith, namely that while there are things that we may not understand, we should accept these on divine authority and live accordingly. His counsel to Speed (still a doubter) was: "You are wrong, Speed; take all of the Book (the Bible) 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.)

Note those words, "*you will live and die a happier man*" for they contain both a confession and a testimony. Lincoln was given to spells of deep mental depression. Herndon says that in two periods of his life he became mentally unbalanced, and at frequent intervals throughout his life, he would sit silent and melancholy, the embodiment of gloom. But he had been given a prescription, for after returning from a visit to the Speeds in Kentucky he wrote a letter to Mary Speed, September 27, 1841, with this sentence:

“Tell your mother that I have not got her ‘present’ (an Oxford Bible) with me, but I intend to read it regularly when I return home. I doubt not that it is really, as she says, the best cure for the blues, could one but take it according to the truth.”<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps the prescription didn’t work as hoped; for a time, the word did not profit, not being mixed with faith. At least that is Lamon’s diagnosis, for he closes his chapter on Lincoln’s religious beliefs with this very remarkable paragraph:

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 spirits, 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 Springfield which enlisted him on the side of unbelief. He paid the bitter penalty in a life of misery.

<sup>6</sup>Nicolay and Hay, Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln: Speeches, Letters and State Papers.



*"It was a grievous sin in Caesar;  
And grievously hath Caesar answered it."*

But Col. Lamon never recognized that a "change"—the new birth—had come to Lincoln while in the White House, and made him a wiser and a "happier man" as he said to Speed. And that "change" was not only a change of heart, but a change of attitude toward the Bible and toward "the Saviour." But let Lincoln himself tell us about it through the mouth of his intimate friends. As already stated, Mr. Lincoln asked Mrs. B——, a member of the Christian Commission her "idea of what constitutes a true Christian experience." She gave him what she considered "satisfactory evidence of having been born again." After a thoughtful silence, he said: "If what you have told me is really a correct view of this great subject, I think I can say with sincerity that I hope I am a Christian. I had lived until my boy Willie died without fully realizing these things. That blow overwhelmed me. It showed me my weakness as I had never felt it before, and if I can take what you have stated as a test, I think I can safely say that I know something of the *change* of which you speak; and I will further add, that it has been my intention for some time, at a suitable opportunity, to make a public religious confession." (Carpenter: *Six Months at the White House*, p. 187.) Mr. Noah Brooks says: ". . . yet he freely expressed himself to me as having a hope of blessed immortality through Jesus Christ. . . . Once or twice, speaking to me of the *change* which had come upon him,

<sup>1</sup>Lamon's Life of Lincoln, p. 504.

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 about the time of Willie's death." (*Scribner's Monthly*, July 1873.) The Rev. Phineas D. Gurley says: "And more than this, 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 that 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." (*Ibid.*) After this "change," notice how Mother Speed's prescription worked,—the Word profited, being mixed with faith.

This is the testimony of Mrs. Lincoln's dress-maker:

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.

\*Elizabeth Keckley, *Behind the Scenes*, p. 118.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### LINCOLN'S CONCEPTION OF CHRIST'S ATONEMENT

Theologians—in the broad sense all of us who believe in God are theologians, that is, we are reasoners about God—may be divided into two schools which for the sake of a convenient nomenclature, let us call for the moment, the *affirmative* and the *negative*. The affirmative school holds that the universe came into being by special creation, the Bible by special revelation, Jesus Christ came by special incarnation, that He died a special propitiation, that sins can be forgiven because of a special expiation. The negative school considers faith in these as either optional with each individual, or openly repudiates them. While the lines between the two schools of theology may not always be absolutely distinct, yet it is true in the main that one either accepts all of the above particulars or repudiates them all. But if there is one of these dogmas which stands out above another as a test by which one can determine as to which school he belongs, it is the doctrine of the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ. All the others are, as it were, foundation stones for the arch, but this is the keystone, the one for which the rest exist. If you believe this dogma, it can be assumed that you believe the others, for they are prerequisites to this.

Now Herndon denied, at one time or another, that Lincoln believed in any of the afore-men-

tioned doctrines. He maintains that Lincoln was an evolutionist, believing that the universe is governed by immutable laws that brook no interference. In his letter to Abbott, he says: "He (Lincoln) held many of the Christian ideas in abhorrence, and among them there was one; namely, that God would forgive the sinner for a violation of His laws. Lincoln maintained that God could not forgive; that punishment had to follow the sin; that Christianity was wrong in teaching forgiveness; that it tended to make man sin in the hope that God would excuse, and so forth. Lincoln contended that the minister should teach that God has affixed punishment to sin, and that no repentance could bribe him to remit it."<sup>1</sup>

But if it can be established that Lincoln did believe in the vicarious atonement of Christ, it will likewise be established that he believed that the God of immutable laws had found a way whereby sin could be forgiven, whereby He might be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly. And if it can be established that Lincoln believed in the Fall of Adam, it will at the same time be established that he was not irrevocably committed to the evolutionary hypothesis, for these two are contrary the one to the other. The fall has no place in the evolutionary hypothesis.

Herndon never wearies of this little story: "In 1835 he (Lincoln) wrote out a small work on Infidelity, and intended to have it published. The book was an attack on the whole grounds of Christianity, and especially was it an attack upon

<sup>1</sup>Lamon, *Life of Lincoln*, p. 495.

the idea that Jesus was the Christ, the true and only begotten Son of God, as the Christian contends." He then goes on to tell how Lincoln's friend Hill snatched away the book from Lincoln (the giant) and stuck it into the stove. How did Herndon who never saw the book know its contents so well? It was with great difficulty that Herndon learned of the book at all, as the following paragraph of James H. Matheny's letter to Herndon written at least thirty years after the burning of the book tells, and please note that Matheny never saw the book but only heard of it as a secret:

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.<sup>2</sup>

And here endeth the quotation. Why, after all this build-up, did he not go on and quote the next paragraph and tell just what Matheny "got from Lincoln's mouth"? May it not be that the next paragraph was never written, for this is one of those signed interviews of Herndon's, written by himself and signed by him with Matheny's name. Read the letter that Matheny wrote to the Rev. J. A. Reed:

Springfield, December 16, 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

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 488.

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.<sup>3</sup>

But from that time on Herndon never ceased to elaborate on the contents of "the little book that Lincoln wrote in 1835 on 'Infidelity' and intended to have published." He needed it, as he makes Matheny say, to defend himself "against charges of misrepresentation." But, sad to say, Hill burned the real evidence.

But Matheny still says that Mr. Lincoln was "an infidel in his former life" and it is quite possible that he got the information "from Lincoln's mouth." But what is an infidel? The word means *one who is unfaithful*, and so has come to be synonymous with *unbeliever*. Any one who proves unfaithful to the traditions of his family is in their eyes an infidel. When a Hebrew becomes a Christian, we say, He has become a believer, but his kinsmen, after his flesh say, He is an infidel. The same holds for a Catholic turning Protestant, or vice versa. Lincoln in 1835 prob-

<sup>3</sup>Scribner's' Monthly, July, 1873.

ably considered himself an "infidel."

In a previous chapter it was intimated that Lincoln had grafted some "wild olive branches" onto the Calvinistic root of his ancestral faith—"Faith of our fathers living still!" But in order to do so it was necessary that he would break off some of the "natural branches," for Calvinism is a complete system; there is no place for grafts unless there first be removals. What did Lincoln break off? What did he graft in? Where did he depart from the faith once delivered to the saints? If we had even the ashes of that "burned book" they might tell us something!

Happily that book was read by at least one other man besides Lincoln before it was burned, if it was burned, for Mentor Graham who may be said to have been the faculty of a small co-educational college in New Salem, with two classes, one being Ann Rutledge and the other Abraham Lincoln, says that it was not. Maybe it shall yet be found. But let Mr. Graham tell the story:

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 endureth 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 transgression 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<sup>4</sup>

The reader will note that the above statement of Mentor Graham is dated some forty years after he read Mr. Lincoln's manuscript, and perhaps some allowance ought to be made for the fact that Graham was a Universalist himself, though we believe an honest one. Much as one might like to disqualify the witness just quoted, and disregard

<sup>4</sup>Illinois State Journal, May 15, 1874.

his testimony that Lincoln entertained heretical opinions, courtesy and honesty require that the second witness be heard. Isaac Cogdal, another Universalist, an acquaintance of Mr. Lincoln from the New Salem days, tells us that Lincoln continued to hold this opinion, even after he became a regular attendant of Dr. Smith's church in Springfield. His letter to B. F. Irwin is given herewith:

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 Cogdall<sup>5</sup>

A third witness is Jonathan Harnett, a Methodist this time, who dictated the following statement to B. F. Irwin and after reading it, endorsed it.

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, was his understanding of the doctrine taught in the scriptures.<sup>6</sup>

All three of the above statements are taken from an article published by Mr. Irwin in the

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

*Illinois State Journal* of May 15, 1874. Many of us can heartily sympathize with him when he says: "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 am not a Universalist myself." That Lincoln wavered from the opinion that the God of the Universe never gets angry, a later chapter may attempt to prove, but to find definite conclusive evidence that he did not believe in universal salvation may not be so easy. Indeed it is easier to believe that the wishful thinking of this broken, tender-hearted man who never could refuse a pardon if there could be found any reason or excuse for granting it, might lead him to extreme views on the mercy of God. Universal amnesty is a pleasing belief; pleasing to the unrepentant sinner, pleasing to the humanitarian instincts of all our hearts. It is more pleasant to contemplate the goodness of God than the severity of God. So kindly was Lincoln, so ready to pardon the soldier who had been lax in duty even to the point of jeopardizing the lives of all his comrades, that the Union generals complained that Lincoln was destroying all discipline, and their men were deserting in droves in the day of battle. It demoralized the army, it tended to demoralize each individual soldier. "With malice toward none. with charity for all," Lincoln would have pardoned the last rebel, Jefferson Davis, John Wilkes Booth, and perhaps even Satan himself, father of lies, of human

slavery, and of all the ills that flesh is heir to. Yet Stanton says he was the "greatest ruler of men," but would you be safe in a universe ruled by a God who never gets angry, and where there is no valley of Gehenna with its everlasting burnings of the irreclaimable debris?

B. F. Irwin closed his article with the following clipping from the *Reading* (Pennsylvania) *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.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### HIS SONGS IN THE NIGHT

“Let me make the ballads of a nation,” said a certain wise man, “and I care not who makes the laws.” The converse of that thesis is, “Tell me what you sing and I will tell you what you are.” Or to paraphrase another wise man’s words, “As a man singeth in his heart, so is he.” Let us do a little archeological research in the sands of time. Perhaps we can unearth some of Mr. Lincoln’s opinions of Christ’s atoning sacrifice here. William E. Curtis says in *The True Abraham Lincoln*:

He could repeat from memory whole chapters of Isaiah (*including the 53rd, no doubt*), the New Testament and the Psalms.<sup>1</sup>

Noah Brooks says:

He could repeat hymns by the hundreds, and quoted Dr. Watts’ and John Wesley’s verses as frequently as he did Shakespeare.<sup>2</sup>

And *mirable dictu!* no less an authority than William H. Herndon adds his gem to this collection:

Although devoid of any natural ability as a singer, Abe nevertheless made many efforts and had great appreciation of certain songs. In after years he told me he doubted if he knew what the harmony of sound was. The songs in vogue then were principally of the sacred order. They were from Watts’ and Dupuy’s hymn books. David Turnham furnished me with a list, marking as

<sup>1</sup>William E. Curtis, *The True Abraham Lincoln*, p. 387.

<sup>2</sup>William E. Curtis, *The True Abraham Lincoln*, p. 379.

special favorites, "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?", "How Tedious and Tasteless the Hours", "There is a Fountain Filled with Blood" and "Alas, and Did My Saviour Bleed?"<sup>3</sup>

Could it have escaped Mr. Herndon's notice that three of the four favorites mentioned are concerned with the Cross and the Blood? Of course one may sing popular songs and even hymns without endorsing their sentiments. The music just goes round and round, and the words follow phonographically. But Mr. Lincoln was not a natural born reproducer of songs; he sang what was in his heart, as the following incident, related by the Rev. William H. Bates of Washington D.C. in his *The Religious Opinions and Life of Abraham Lincoln*, will show:

A lady eighty-seven years old—one of the most remarkable women I have ever met—was very recently "reminiscing" in my presence, and here is one of the stories she told:

"It was, I think, in May, 1858 or 1859, that I was making a night trip from Chicago to St. Louis on the Chicago and Alton. That was before the days of Pullman. The railroad was narrow-gauged and primitive. The cars and their seats and windows were small. Among the passengers were an old gentleman and his wife, near whom I took a seat. I wrapped a shawl over my head and dozed away for hours. I was awakened by a gush of fresh air and the fragrance of flowers as some ladies entered. In the party was a man, very tall and very homely, who took a seat opposite mine. As day began to break, he threw up the sash, leaned his head out, and held his hat in place with his right hand, while his body filled the seat and his legs extended to the middle of the aisle. As if enraptured by the beauty of the sunrise, unconscious of the presence

<sup>3</sup>Herndon and Weik, *Life of Lincoln*, Vol. 1, p. 57.

of anyone, he began to croon, in a tender, reflective voice, an old-fashioned hymn tune, the words of which soon became audible:

‘When all thy mercies, O my God,  
My rising soul surveys,  
Transported with the view, I’m lost  
In wonder, love, and praise.’

“There were two other stanzas from this hymn of Addison’s, but the first one was repeated over and over again. As the conductor came along, I quietly asked, ‘Who is this man?’

“‘Abraham Lincoln,’ he replied; ‘and he is on his way to debate with Stephen A. Douglas.’

“I had heard much of the ability of Douglas; and now I had seen, yes, and heard, his antagonist. The simplicity, the apparently sincere devoutness, the religiousness of the man, made an impression that was indelibly stamped on my memory.”<sup>4</sup>

Since William E. Curtis tells us as quoted above that Mr. Lincoln could quote the Psalms from memory, it will be profitable to follow that clue also. The Honorable William Reed, U. S. Consul at Dundee, Scotland, wrote under date of March 4, 1874:

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.<sup>5</sup>

Whether or not this is the same Psalm Book which later came into the possession of the late Dr. William J. Johnstone, author of *Lincoln the Christian* and *How Lincoln Prayed*, the present

<sup>4</sup>p. 45.

<sup>5</sup>Illinois State Journal, May 15, 1874.



writer is unaware, but his daughter says in a personal letter to me: "I have in my possession my Father's most prized treasure—Lincoln's own Book of Psalms" and through her kindness I have had the pleasure of examining the book. It is a King James Version, very large print, leather bound, printed by the American Bible Society, and has "Abraham's Lincoln" in gold letters on the front cover. It shows the marks of use but not of abuse.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### SUPPLEMENTARY SUFFERING

We must not leave the subject of Lincoln's faith in the blood atonement without considering what he seemed to believe concerning man's part in it. Maybe he gathered the idea from those words in Paul's Epistle to the Colossians (1:24-26 R.V.): "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church; whereof I was made a minister (steward), according to the dispensation of God which was given me to you-ward, to fulfil the word of God, even the mystery which hath been hid for ages . . ." Paul's philosophy concerning suffering is too large a subject to discuss here, except to say that he was not talking of completing Christ's vicarious sufferings on the cross of which the Saviour said, "It is finished." But a certain amount of affliction and suffering was necessary for the good of the Church (Christ's body in which He was still suffering with His people) for the perfecting of the individual, as an example to others, a necessary experience if one was to comfort another, and as a witness to the world. Paul was rejoicing in bearing his share, and that he was chosen as a steward to minister the benefits of his suffering to others.

Two instances will give the reader an op-

portunity to judge whether or not Lincoln's idea was related to Paul's. The first story is related by F. B. Carpenter, the artist who was privileged to spend "*Six Months in the White House*" during Lincoln's administration while painting the picture "The Emancipation Proclamation" and wrote a book with the above title from which this incident is taken :

The Hon. Orlando Kellogg, of New York, was sitting in his room at his boarding-house one evening, when one of his constituents appeared,—a white-headed old man—who had come to Washington in great trouble, to seek the aid of his representative in behalf of his son. His story was this: The young man had formerly been very dissipated. During an absence from home a year or two previous to the war, he enlisted in the regular army, and, after serving six months, deserted. Returning to his father, who knew nothing of this, he reformed his habits, and when the war broke out, entered heart and soul into the object of raising a regiment in his native county, and was subsequently elected one of its officers. He had proved an efficient officer, distinguishing himself particularly on one occasion, in a charge across a bridge, when he was severely wounded—his colonel being killed by his side. Shortly after this, he came in contact with one of his old companions in the "regular" service, who recognized him, and declared his purpose of informing against him. Overwhelmed with mortification, the young man procured a furlough and returned home, revealing the matter to his father, and declaring his purpose never to submit to an arrest,—“he would die first.” In broken tones the old man finished his statement, saying: “Can you do anything for us, Judge? It is a hard, hard case!”

“I will see about that,” replied the representative, putting on his hat; “wait here until I return.” He went immediately to the White House, and fortunately finding Mr. Lincoln alone, they sat down together, and he re-

peated the old man's story. The President made no demonstration of particular interest until the Judge reached the description of the charge across the bridge, and the wound received. "Do you say," he interrupted, "that the young man was wounded?" "Yes," replied the congressman, "badly." "Then he has shed his blood for his country," responded Mr. Lincoln, musingly. "Kellog," he continued, brightening up, "isn't there something in Scripture about the 'shedding of blood' being 'the remission of sins'?" "Guess you are about right there," replied the Judge. "It is a good 'point,' and there is no going behind it," rejoined the President; and taking up his pen, another 'pardon'—this time without 'oath,' condition, or reserve—was added to the records of the War Office."

The second incident is taken from "*Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*," a book written by the Catholic priest Chiniquy whom Lincoln had been instrumental in rescuing from a priestly plot culminating in a lawsuit against him in Urbana, Illinois in 1856. For his services Lincoln charged fifty dollars for services estimated by his client as worth at least two thousand dollars.

When Abraham Lincoln was writing the due-bill, the relaxation of the great strain upon my mind, and the great kindness of my benefactor and defender in charging me so little for such a service, and the terrible presentiment that he would pay with his life what he had done for me, caused me to break into sobs and tears.

As Mr. Lincoln had finished writing the due bill, he turned around to me, and said, "Father Chiniquy, what are you crying for? Ought you not to be the most happy man alive? You have beaten your enemies and gained the most glorious victory, and you will come out of all your trouble in triumph."

"Dear Mr. Lincoln," I answered, "allow me to tell you

that the joy I should naturally feel for such a victory is destroyed in my mind by the fear of what it may cost you. There were, then, in the crowd, not less than ten or twelve Jesuits from Chicago and St. Louis, who came to hear my sentence of condemnation to the penitentiary. But it was on their heads that you have brought the thunders of heaven and earth! Nothing can be compared to the expression of their rage against you, when you not only wrenched me from their cruel hands, but you were making the walls of the court-house tremble under the awful and superhumanly eloquent denunciation of their infamy, diabolical malice, and total want of Christian and human principle, in the plot they had formed for my destruction. What troubles my soul, just now, and draws my tears, is that it seems to me that I have read your sentence of death in their bloody eyes. How many other noble victims have already fallen at their feet!"

He tried to divert my mind, at first, with a joke. "Sign this," said he. "It will be my warrant of death."

But after I had signed, he became more solemn, and said, "I know that Jesuits never forget nor forsake. But man must not care how and where he dies, provided he dies at the post of honor and duty," and he left me.

The first formidable plot against Lincoln's life was a plan to assassinate him while passing through Baltimore on the way to his first inauguration, foiled by Pinkerton persuading him to detour and enter Washington secretly by way of Philadelphia. More plots followed, and his mail brought many threats. Once his hat was shot from his head while riding home on a dark night from an army camp.

Plots were discovered in Europe, Canada and the South. It would be unjust to suggest that these were all due to Jesuitical influence. But Chiniquy made three trips to Washington to

warn the President of plots he had discovered. It was on his last effort, June 9, 1864, that Lincoln replied in part:

"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 words, 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 us 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 of 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 gifted chieftan, 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."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>pp. 706-710.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### A CONFESSING CHRISTIAN

Under date of January 31, 1874, Ward H. Lamont wrote to the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher protesting against what he considered unjust criticism of himself which had appeared in the *Christian Union* and which he attributed to Mr. Beecher. In this letter he tells of his honest effort to produce a true biography of Lincoln, but "In your comment upon that part of the biography which treats of Mr. Lincoln's religion you say: 'A certain doubt is cast upon his argument by the heartlessness of it. We cannot avoid an impression that an anti-Christian animus inspires him.' And you further say, 'He does not know what Lincoln was, nor what religion is.'"

Both of these charges Lamont denies and with some reason. In this same letter he says of Lincoln: "He was not a perfect man, yet with all his humanity he was better than any other man I ever knew or expect to know. He was not a Christian in the orthodox sense of the term, yet he was as conscientiously religious as any man. . . . It surely cannot be a difficult matter to determine whether a man who lived so recently and so famously was a Christian or not. If he was a Christian he must have been sincere, for sincerity is one of the first of Christian virtues, and if sincere he must have availed himself of the promises of our Lord by a public profession of his

faith, baptism in His name and membership in His church. Did Mr. Lincoln do this? No one pretends that he did, and those who maintain that he was nevertheless a Christian must hold that he may follow Jesus and yet deny Him; that he may be ashamed to own his Redeemer and yet claim His intercession; that he may serve Him acceptably, forsaking nothing, acknowledging nothing, repenting nothing. When it is established by the testimony of the Christian ministry that sinners may enter Heaven by a broad back gate like this, few will think it worth while to continue in the straight and narrow path prescribed by the Word of God.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Lamon is quite right in saying that all these things Mr. Lincoln ought to have done, and not to have left the very many Christian things he did do undone. That Mr. Lincoln had faith in the Triune God there can be little doubt. That his beliefs were sufficiently orthodox to be accepted by a very conservative Presbyterian church, Dr. Gurley himself has assured us. And that it was his intention, if he had been spared, to make a public confession, has already been shown, but that he postponed this important duty far too long cannot be denied.

But Mr. Lamon is too hasty in concluding that membership in the visible church is an absolute condition of entering Heaven, except through the “broad back gate.” Jesus Christ did not explicitly command that every individual should unite with the visible church; but He said: “Who-

<sup>1</sup>Dorothy Lamon, *Recollections of Lincoln*, pp. 333-337.

soever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth me before men, or is ashamed of me, shall be denied before the angels of God." Was Lincoln "ashamed to own his Redeemer" as Lamson says? Did he not confess Him before men? And shall the Son of man not confess Him before the angels? His word is pledged.

There are two kinds of confession obligatory on mankind. There is the confession demanded of the individual, the confession that Christ is the Redeemer who has purchased him with His own blood and his Lord whom he serves because he is no longer his own but is bought with a price. There is also the confession that is demanded of kings and judges and all civil officers and of all citizens as set forth in Psalm II, which concerns the official appointment of Jesus Christ as King of kings. Read it and note these verses: "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion . . . Thou art my Son . . . Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. . . . Kiss the Son (*the kiss of submission and allegiance*), lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

The Old Testament shows us what God expects as the fruits of nations living in subjection to His appointed King. The New Testament teaches us of the fruits of the Spirit expected of the individual owning Him as Lord. Each supplements and is necessary, to the other. It takes a righteous nation to provide an environment for Chris-

tians to grow; it takes multitudes of Christians to uphold a Christian government. A nation cannot go to Heaven when all its citizens are on the road to hell, neither can the multitude of citizens go to Heaven when the nation is on the road to hell.

Jesus told a parable of a father who would have his two sons work in his vineyard but when he commanded them, one of them said, "I go, sir," but went not; the other said, "I will not," but afterwards repented and went. The former represented the nation of Israel which made a profession of faith and of obedience to God but failed utterly to do His will. The other son is like the Gentile nations who shall yet come into God's kingdom. The freeing of the slaves was a disobedient son relenting. Israel was a theocratic nation, its laws given from God, its rulers were God's deputies, God's vicars; but the people were a disobedient and gainsaying people, hard-hearted, stiff-necked and rebellious. Our own nation has secularized itself, not so much as mentioning God in our Constitution, although all of the original thirteen colonies except Virginia had such acknowledgments of God in their charters. But it was President Lincoln's constant concern that our nation should be "on God's side," that we should know and do His will. Mr. Lincoln neglected too long to make his public profession of Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord, but as our President, again and again, he led our nation, as we shall see, to recognize officially to some degree, its obligation to God. Which was the more im-

portant duty for him? Well, both.

In the following chapters it will be pointed out that President Lincoln (1) believed that this nation was conceived, born and dedicated "under God" to the great principle that all men are created free and equal and (2) that the Civil War was God's chastisement for neglecting our messianic mission and message; (3) he called the nation to repentance by proclaiming certain days for fasting, humiliation, confession, prayer and repentance; (4) that he called for four special days of thanksgiving and prayer and originated the annual Thanksgiving Day for our nation; (5) that he confessed God as the source of our blessings in each of his messages to Congress; (6) that he considered himself as a listening post to know God's will and lead the nation to do it; and finally (7) he purposed in his second administration to lead us as a nation to a realization of God's high purpose for us.

Judge for yourselves, when you have read the evidence, whether Mr. Lamon is right when he says that Mr. Lincoln failed to make "a public profession of his faith," that he was "ashamed to own his Redeemer," that he was one "forsaking nothing, acknowledging nothing, repenting nothing." Was there ever a king or a President who endeavored more conscientiously to honor and obey his Lord and King?

CHAPTER XXXIX  
GOD'S RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

The mill of the gods grinds slowly,  
But it grinds exceeding small;  
Though with patience He stands waiting,  
With exactness grinds He all.

—*Longfellow*

Truth forever on the scaffold,  
Wrong forever on the throne,  
Yet that scaffold sways the future,  
For behind the dim unknown  
Standeth God within the shadow,  
Keeping watch above His own.

—*Lowell.*

“Trite,” did you say? Then what about this one? “I tremble for my country when I remember that God is just.”—*Thomas Jefferson.*

Or this one? “Be not deceived; God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Or this one? “For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.” All trite? “Trite” often means that a thing is so unanswerably true that the head nods assent, but the heart has become so hardened that it neither believes nor trembles. Because Retributive Divine Justice has become “trite” to our race, ancient empires lie hopelessly buried and a global war now in progress makes countless millions mourn.

“Vengeance is Mine. I will repay” is a law of the Supreme Ruler of the Universe that never became trite to Abraham Lincoln. To him this meant several things: (1) God loved right and hated wrong. “If slavery is not wrong, then nothing is wrong.” God hated slavery. (2) Our nation had sinned in permitting slavery, in protecting it, and in proposing to extend its territory. (3) The cup of iniquity was full to the brim, and it was now time to drink it submissively to its bitter dregs. (4) “Repentance before forgiveness is a provision of the Christian system,” as Lincoln said concerning Douglas, “and on that condition alone will the Republicans grant him forgiveness.” (5) But Lincoln had magnificent hopes for our country as occupying a great place in God’s plan when her chastisement would be accomplished and she would be restored to God’s favor.

How far different was Lincoln’s philosophy of history from those who say that God is not concerned with nations, but only with the individuals who make the nation; or from those who affirm that the State can do no wrong, and is not subject to the moral law! He was too conversant with the Old Testament Prophets to accept any such secular ideas of the State’s place in God’s economy. To him the Most High was a sovereign God, a King of kings and a Lord of lords, ruling in the kingdom of men and giving it to whomsoever He would. His scepter was a scepter of righteousness. Yes, and at times Abraham Lincoln was His prophet.



He played this prophetic role on rare occasions in pleading at the bar. He had occasions to use it in his debates with Douglas, but it came to the fore about the time of his election to the Presidency. At the time of the historic Bateman-Lincoln conversation, his election was all but certain. Ohio, Indiana and Pennsylvania at that time held their elections in October and had already voted strong Republican majorities, and the opposition was divided between two rival candidates. Holland has relayed to us Bateman's account of Lincoln's outburst of emotion and of how mightily the spirit came upon him when he learned that the ministers and church people of Springfield were about to vote against him, not that it would affect the outcome, but that it showed how seared and ripe for punishment the public conscience had become.

“. . . These men well know that I am for freedom . . . and that my opponents are for slavery. They know this, and yet with this Book (the New Testament) 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 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 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 every thing. I know that 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 can not

stand,' and Christ and reason say the same; and they will find it so. Douglas doesn't care whether slavery is voted up or 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.

Dr. Holland continues:

He seemed especially impressed with the solemn grandeur of portions of Revelation describing the wrath of Almighty God, and repeatedly referred to his conviction that the day of wrath was at hand and would issue in the overthrow of slavery.<sup>1</sup>

But this conviction was not expressed in private interviews only. More than a year before, September 16, 1859, in an address in Columbus, Ohio, he said that "there was danger to this country, danger of the avenging justice of God, in that little unimportant popular sovereignty question of Judge Douglas. He supposed there was a question of God's eternal justice wrapped up in the enslaving of any race of men, or any man, and that those who did so braved the arm of Jehovah—that when a nation thus dared the Almighty, every friend of that nation had cause to dread His wrath."

He is a brave skipper who accepts the captaincy of a vessel when all the typhoon signals are up, and steers into the open sea on an imperative voyage. But Lincoln courageously took the wheel and headed the Ship of State into the oncoming hurricane, saying, "I see the storm coming, and I know His hand is in it. If He has a place and

<sup>1</sup>J. G. Holland, *Life of Lincoln*, pp. 236-238.

work for me—and I think He has—I believe I am ready.”

The storm proved more terrific, more prolonged, more chilling, more drenching, more trying on mind, body and soul than he could have anticipated, but he never deserted his post or gave up hope. It was God’s storm, but it was also God’s ship, and He would bring it through. Meanwhile, the storm must be endured. But with every thunder crash, he seems to grip the wheel tighter, and say, “Thy will be done.” Listen :

June 1862, to Ex-Senator James F. Wilson and others :

I not only believe that Providence is not unmindful of the struggle in which this nation is engaged, that if we do not right, God will let us go our own way to ruin; and that if we do right, He will lead us safely out of this wilderness, . . . but I also believe He will compel us to do right in order that He may do these things, not so much because we desire them as that they accord with His plans of dealing with this nation, in the midst of which He means to establish justice.<sup>2</sup>

September 28, 1862, to a group of Quakers :

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 purpose, 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

<sup>2</sup>North American Review, December, 1896, p. 667.

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.<sup>3</sup>

September 30, 1862, a written soliloquy.

The will of God prevails. . . . 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 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.<sup>4</sup>

April 4, 1864, letter to A. G. Hodges:

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, desired 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.<sup>5</sup>

June 9, 1864, to "Father" Chiniqy:

My God alone knows what I have already suffered for my dear country's sake. But my fear is that the

<sup>3</sup>Nicolay and Hay, *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln: Speeches, Letters and State Papers.*

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

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, and 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.<sup>6</sup>

September 4, 1864, in a letter to Mrs. Eliza P. Gurney:

The purposes of the Almighty are perfect, and must prevail, though we erring mortals 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.<sup>7</sup>

March 4, 1865, from his second inaugural address:

“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 wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe 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—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 and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every

<sup>6</sup>C. Chiniquy, *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*, p. 708.

<sup>7</sup>Nicolay and Hay, *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln: Speeches, Letters and State Papers*.

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."

Through all these quotations there runs the scarlet thread of the Divine Will, Divine Justice, Divine Recompense, Divine Exactness;

"With exactness grinds He all."

## CHAPTER XL

### FORGIVENESS AFTER REPENTANCE

One might infer from the foregoing chapter, that Lincoln believed that God was so exacting in His justice that there is no such thing as forgiveness. Indeed Herndon states as quoted by Lamon: "He held many of the Christian ideas in abhorrence, and among them there was this one; namely, that God would forgive the sinner for a violation of His laws. Lincoln maintained that God could not forgive; that punishment has to follow the sin; that Christianity was wrong in teaching forgiveness; that it tended to make man sin in the hope that God would excuse, and so forth. Lincoln contended that the minister should teach that God has affixed punishment to sin, and that no repentance could bribe him to remit it."

Mr. Herndon, unwittingly perhaps, has here stated a perfectly orthodox dogma, namely, that an absolutely just God cannot forgive sin but must exact the full penalty. But the penalty for all forgiven sin has been paid on Calvary's Cross. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." The atonement of Jesus Christ was a kind of shock absorber between a just God and a sinful race. Lincoln understood that doctrine perfectly. Atonement was necessary and effectual for nations as for individuals. This Lincoln also understood. "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgive-

ness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.”

Believing in that forgiveness through Jesus Christ, he did not despair of his own or of other men's salvation. Neither did he despair of our nation's sin being forgiven, but he believed that a certain amount of punishment would be necessary to bring the nation to true repentance, and that “forgiveness after repentance is a provision of the Christian system.” This is clearly proved by his two proclamations calling for days of fasting, humiliation and prayer.

President Lincoln was inaugurated March 4, 1861. On April 12 Fort Sumter was fired on and surrendered on the 14th. The Battle of Bull Run was fought and lost on July 21 and Lincoln's first call to the nation for a day of humiliation and prayer was issued August 12 as follows:

#### PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S FIRST FAST DAY PROCLAMATION

Whereas a joint committee of both houses of Congress has waited on the President of the United States and requested him to “recommend a day of public prayer, humiliation, and fasting, to be observed by the people of the United States with religious solemnities and the offering of fervent supplications to Almighty God for the safety and welfare of these States, His blessings on their arms, and a speedy restoration of peace:”

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 offences, 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 faction and civil war, it is peculiarly 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—to pray that we may be spared further punishment though most justly deserved; that our arms may be blessed and made effectual for the reestablishment of law, order, and peace throughout the wide extent of our country; and that the inestimable boon of civil and religious liberty, earned under His guidance and blessing by the labors and sufferings of our fathers, may be restored in all its original excellence:

Therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do appoint the last Thursday in September next as a day of humiliation, prayer, and fasting for all people of the nation. And I do earnestly recommend to all the people, and especially to all ministers and teachers of religion, of all denominations, and to all heads of families, to observe and keep that day, according to their several creeds and modes of worship, in all humility and with all religious solemnity, to the end that the united prayer of the nation may ascend to the Throne of Grace, and bring down plentiful blessings upon our country.<sup>1</sup>

This was a fitting confession of sin and a humble plea for forgiveness, and it would be interesting if it could be said that the tide of war turned immediately, but confession is not repentance. Something more was needed. One of these “past offenses” was slavery. In his first inaugural, Lincoln quoted from a former address: “I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it now exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so.”

<sup>1</sup>Nicolay and Hay, Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln: Letters, Speeches and State Papers.

One disastrous defeat followed upon another's heels for another whole year, until Lincoln said, "But on many a defeated field there was a voice louder than the thundering of cannon. It was the voice of God, crying, 'Let my people go.' We were all very slow in realizing it was God's voice, but after many humiliating defeats the nation came to believe it as a great and solemn command. Great multitudes begged and prayed that I might answer God's voice by signing the Emancipation Proclamation, and I did it, believing we never should be successful in the great struggle unless we obeyed the Lord's command. Since that the 'God of Battles' has been on our side."

But the tide of battle did not turn immediately after the issue of the Emancipation Proclamation. The preliminary Proclamation was issued in September 1862 to take effect with the final issue on January 1, 1863. But it was a military measure, intended to cripple the South by depriving them of a slave supported army, and to help the North by enlisting Negro soldiers. It freed the slaves in the disloyal parts of the South but not in the loyal Border States. But God's terms were still the same as He gave to Pharaoh through Moses, "There shall not a hoof be left behind." Doubtful victories, and defeats that were not doubtful, sorrowful homes, mounting public debt, heavy taxes, treasonable agitators, antagonistic foreign governments, peace-at-any-price agitators, all these registered their effects in the political elections of 1862. "And those elections! What an hour for an administration travailing in pain to bring forth a new Nation! New York by a ma-

majority of nearly 11,000 defeated loyal Governor Morgan, and elected Horatio Seymour. New Jersey gave Joel Parker, a Copperhead, a majority of nearly 15,000 for Governor, and turned down the patriot Olden. Pennsylvania, despite the fact that Andrew G. Curtin, a tower of strength to Lincoln, sat in the Governor's chair, gave the opposition candidate a majority of 3,500 votes. Ohio defeated the administration by 5,500 and lent endorsement to Valandingham. Indiana cast a majority of nearly 10,000 votes against Lincoln's administration, and gave Tom Hendricks inner joy. Illinois, the President's own state, cast 16,500 votes of a majority against her most illustrious son. In Michigan and Iowa and Wisconsin and Minnesota was such a slump in the vote cast two years before for the President as voiced a pitiful want of confidence. Even one in four of the soldiers voting in the field voted against the administration. The ten great loyal States which had rolled up a majority of more than 208,000 when Lincoln was made President, now cast a majority of nearly 36,000 against him. The States which two years before sent 78 representatives to the lower House to uphold the administration to 37 against it, now sent only 57 to uphold the President as against 67 returned against him. The opponents in his rear had dealt the honest President a harder blow than the armed foes in front. The clamor which filled the land against 'shedding priceless blood for worthless niggers,' had done its work. The policy of Lincoln was disapproved."

If there was any insincerity in the nation's response to the First Fast Day Proclamation, any self-dependence, any mock humility, it must have been pretty well crushed out before the Second Fast Day Proclamation was issued by President Lincoln on March 30, 1863. It came about in this way. On March 2, Senator Harlan of Iowa moved the following resolution in the Senate which passed the next day without a dissenting vote:

#### THE HARLAN RESOLUTION

RESOLVED, That, devoutly recognizing the supreme authority and just government of Almighty God in the affairs of men and of Nations, and sincerely believing that no people, however great in numbers and resources or however strong in the justice of their cause, can prosper without His favor, and at the same time deploring the National offenses which provoked His righteous judgment, yet encouraged, in this day of trouble, by the assurance of His Word, to seek Him for succor according to His appointed way, through Jesus Christ, the Senate of the United States do hereby request the President of the United States by his proclamation to designate and set apart a day for National prayer and humiliation, requesting all the people of the land to suspend their secular pursuits and unite in keeping the day in solemn communion with the Lord of Hosts, supplicating Him to enlighten the counsels and direct the policy of the rulers of the Nations and to support the soldiers, sailors and marines, and whole people in the firm discharge of duty, until the existing rebellion shall be overthrown and the blessing of peace restored to our bleeding country.

Acting on this request of the Senate, the President issued the following:

#### PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S SECOND FAST DAY PROCLAMATION

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 country to its former happy condition of unity and peace.

Perhaps no one except an inspired prophet should say categorically that this was the turning point of the war, but certain it is that this was the time when the cause of the Union was passing through its deepest gloom; gloom that was to pass with the Battle of Gettysburg and the fall of Vicksburg in July 3-5, 1863. Our nation had done three things to deserve forgiveness and prepare for victory: (1) In the words of the Harlan Resolution, it had "devoutly recognized the supreme authority and just government of Almighty God in the affairs of men and of nations" and sought "Him for succor according to His appointed way, through Jesus Christ. (2) It had observed a day of humiliation, confession and prayer. (3) It had brought forth fruits meet for repentance in proclaiming the freedom of the slaves. At least we may say without fear of contradiction that these are the very things which the Scriptures commend as paving the way to national victories.

It is a very significant fact that when Joseph Howard wanted to create a Wall Street panic so that he might profit thereby, he forged a bogus Fast Day Proclamation, signed President Lin-

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

coln's and Secretary of State William H. Seward's names to it and sent it to the newsrooms of all the New York papers about 4:00 A.M. of May 18, 1864. It was too late for some of the papers to publish that morning, others were suspicious of it, but the "World" and the "Journal of Commerce" fell into the trap. It was so timed that it would catch the boats about to sail for Europe, but the hoax was exposed so that no damage was done abroad, and while gold rose 5 or 6 per cent that day it immediately subsided, thanks to the quick work of Major General Dix who communicated with Washington, and exposed the fraud. The wording of the proclamation shows what a clever counterfeiter Howard was:

#### THE BOGUS FAST DAY PROCLAMATION

*Executive Mansion, Washington, D. C., May 17, 1864*

FELLOW CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES:

In all exigencies it becomes a Nation carefully to scrutinize its line of conduct, humbly to approach the Throne of Grace and meekly to implore forgiveness, wisdom and guidance.

For reasons known only to Him, it has been decreed that this country should be the scene of unparalleled outrage, and this Nation the monumental sufferer of the nineteenth century. With a heavy heart but an undiminished confidence in our cause, I approach the performance of duty, rendered imperative by sense of weakness before the Almighty, and of justice to the people. . . .<sup>3</sup>

The proclamation then referred to Grant's losses in the Wilderness Campaign, the Red River disaster and other military movements, and recommended that the "26th day of May be set apart

<sup>3</sup>Lincoln in the Telegraph Office, David Homer Bates, p. 229.

as a day of fasting and prayer, ending with a call for 400,000 more men to be raised by draft unless that many volunteered before June 15.

Secretary Stanton telegraphed General Dix that "the spurious proclamation was a base and treasonable forgery" and Lincoln signed the telegram ordering "to arrest and imprison . . . the editors, proprietors, and publishers of the aforesaid newspapers." Stanton, suspecting the recently organized Independent Telegraph Company of having transmitted the message, ordered their offices seized in Washington, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Harrisburg and Pittsburgh, and their superintendents, managers, and operators confined in Fort Lafayette. Three innocent writers for a news syndicate were also drawn into the net.

On the 20th of May the real culprit was arrested and frankly confessed that he had done it as a stock-jobbing operation. He was a newspaper man with a pleasing personality who had formerly been secretary to the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher. Beecher had liked him, and pled with the President for his release. Beecher had been a great help in the war by his masterly speeches in support of the Union in many cities of England, turning the adverse tide of sentiment there. Lincoln telegraphed Stanton:

*Executive Mansion, Washington, August 22, 1864*  
*Hon. Secretary of War:*

MY DEAR SIR: I very much wish to oblige Henry Ward Beecher by releasing Howard; but I wish you to be satisfied when it is done. What say you? Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN



Stanton replied:

I have no objection, if you think it right—and this is a proper time. E. M. S.<sup>4</sup>

And yet in spite of all these calls for prayer for forgiveness for our national sins, Herndon says that Lincoln, who was so incapable of insincerity, “maintained that God could not forgive.”

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER XLI

### HIS MESSIANIC COMPLEX

To an unbeliever who reads for the first time the life and writings of the Apostle Paul, he may appear to be a very egotistical Jew. Even the search lights of Heaven are all concentrated and focused on him on the Damascus Road. From that day he becomes the Apostle to all the Gentile nations, and the most startling example of the mercy of God—himself being the judge. But to the believer who reads the same story sympathetically, there is not even a suggestion of the exaggerated ego. He is not the madman that Festus took him to be, but speaks the words of truth and soberness. And the same might be said of each and all of those Old Testament prophets who claimed for themselves a Divine commission. Yet the conviction of having been divinely selected and anointed and commissioned for a special role in the drama of Eternity is by no means confined to Bible times or Bible characters. Lincoln had it.

How madly egotistical Jesus seemed to His home town people when He read: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach . . . deliverance to the captives . . ." then said in effect, "That was written about me." They were filled with wrath and led Him to the brow of the hill that they might cast Him down headlong. That is the Messianic conviction. In

His case it was based on fact. In John Brown's case Lincoln himself said that it was fanaticism, but many would say the same of Lincoln's case.

Not only did Lincoln consider himself chosen of God for a special role as citations to be given later prove, but our Nation itself was to him a divinely ordained prophet, separated from birth and anointed to deliver a special prophetic message to the world, namely—"All men are created equal." Lincoln tells us of the birth and dedication of the young prophet in the first paragraph of his Gettysburg Address:

Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

The formation of the Confederacy was the giant adversary coming out to challenge the young prophet. Now listen to the challenger defying the prophet and his message. It is the voice of Alexander H. Stephens, Vice President of the Confederate States speaking in Savannah a few weeks after his inauguration:

The new constitution makes an end, once for all, of the disturbing problems that have arisen out of our institution, slavery. This was the immediate cause of the rupture and of the revolution. The prevailing ideas entertained by Jefferson and most of the leading statesmen at the time of the formation of the old Constitution, were that the enslavement of the Africans was in violation of the law of nature; that it was wrong in principle, socially, morally, and politically. . . . Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea. Its foundations are laid, its corner-stone rests upon the great truth, that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery—

subordination to the superior race—is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, to be based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth. Secession became necessary when the North refused to recognize the great moral, political, and religious truth that there can be no other solid foundation than the slavery of the negro. . . . It is, indeed, in conformity with the ordinance of the Creator. . . . The great objects of humanity are best attained when there is conformity to His laws and decrees, in the formation of governments as well as in all things else.<sup>1</sup>

Could two ideologies be more diametrically opposed than these two: “All men are created equal” vs. “The negro is not equal to the white man.”

“How is the gold become dim!  
How is the most fine gold changed!”

Slavery was already in existence when the Constitution was adopted, but territorial restrictions had been placed upon it, restrictions against which it had constantly chafed, and tried continually to disrupt, so that the declaration of the equality of all men was virtually a dead letter. But not dead either, for the Abolitionists would not be silent, and the greedy slave traders were just as dissatisfied. Hence the clash. The rest of that Gettysburg Address is the Resurrection Trump calling for a re-dedication to “the unfinished work” . . . “that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom.”

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-

<sup>1</sup>Emil Ludwig, Abraham Lincoln, pp. 249, 250.

field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting that we should do this.

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

To sum this up in another figure, Lincoln when his faith was strong, looked upon the war, not as a destroying agent, but as a purging fire, burning away the dross, that our nation might be purified to complete the commission of telling the world that "All men are created free and equal." Our Second World War is an advanced stage of the same message. Read again Stephens' words quoted above and think of Nazism and Hitler as you read and you realize that it is the old question of race superiority that is being fought over again on a global scale. America's prophetic message is pulling down the strongholds of special privilege.

This message of the Declaration of Independence was Lincoln's message also. He could not re-

member when he had not hated slavery. The debate with Douglas had defined the issue. The secession had precipitated the crisis. Now listen to Lincoln tell us of his divine commission. Speaking to Hon. Newton Bateman on the eve of his election:

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.<sup>2</sup>

He was relying on the God who commissioned him to aid and protect him. In his farewell address on leaving Springfield he said:

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 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 and faith you will invoke His wisdom and

<sup>2</sup>J. G. Holland, *Life of Lincoln*, p. 237.

guidance for me.<sup>3</sup>

Like other prophets, he would gladly have resigned, but would not shirk his duty. He said to the Rev. R. W. Miner in April, 1862:

I would gladly, if I could, take my neck from under the yoke, and go home with you to Springfield, and live as I used, in peace with my friends, than to endure this harassing kind of life. But it hath pleased Almighty God to place me in my present position, and, looking to Him for wisdom and divine guidance, I must work out my destiny as best I can.<sup>4</sup>

To the Rev. Byron Sunderland, D.D. and other friends in December, 1862:

What I am to do in the present emergency (issuing the Emancipation Proclamation) 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 in any manner, and at any time, as in His wisdom and might may be pleasing to Him.<sup>5</sup>

In 1863, Colonel McKaye and Robert Dale Owen were reporting to the President how the colored folks of the South were venerating him, even to the point of ascribing divine attributes to him, and Lincoln said:

It is a momentous thing to be the instrument under Providence of the liberation of a race.<sup>6</sup>

The Spirit of God came upon Lincoln, a spirit of vision and of prophecy, and he seemed as if

<sup>3</sup>Weekly Illinois State Journal, February 13, 1861.

<sup>4</sup>Lincoln Scrapbook, Library of Congress, p. 52.

<sup>5</sup>Scribner's Monthly, July, 1873, p. 342.

<sup>6</sup>F. B. Carpenter, Six Months in the White House, p. 209.

caught up into the third heaven: "Sometimes in the excitement of speaking I seem to see the end of slavery. I feel the time is soon coming when the sun shall shine and the rain fall upon no man who goes forth to unrequited toil. How this will come, by whom it will come I cannot tell, . . . but that time will surely come."

Mr. Lincoln had the true prophet's perspective. He was willing to die for the cause, and expected to die for it, but he was sure that there was a just God over all, and that the cause must ultimately triumph. Speaking to Bateman he said: "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." In Philadelphia in February, 1861, he said: "If this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle (equality), I was about to say I would rather be assassinated on the spot than to surrender it. . . . I have said nothing but what I am willing to live by, and, if it be the pleasure of Almighty God, die by." To Mr. Munsell, president of Illinois Wesleyan University, the President said in 1863: "I do not doubt—I have never doubted—that our country would finally come through safe and undivided. But do not misunderstand me; I do not know how it can be. . . . But the God of our fathers, who raised up this country to be the refuge and asylum of the oppressed and downtrodden of all nations, will not let it perish now. I may not live to see it, and I do not expect to live to see it, but God will



bring us through safe.”

Even in the darkest hours of those dark days and darker nights of the Civil War, the light of his faith did not go into total eclipse. When the clouds of defeat shut out the light of God’s face, he could still hear God’s voice guiding him, and his heart replied, as his lips sometimes uttered the words, “I am confident.” Read again in full his words to Senator Wilson and others previously quoted: “My faith is greater than yours. I not only believe that Providence is not unmindful . . . He will lead us safely out of this wilderness. . . . He will compel us to do right. . . . They accord with His plans of dealing with this nation, in the midst of which He means to establish justice. . . . I have felt His hand upon me in great trials and submitted to His guidance. . . .”

To Mrs. Eliza P. Gurney (also previously quoted) he wrote: “Surely He intends some great good to follow this mighty convulsion, which no mortal could make, and no mortal could stay.” To L. E. Chittenden he said: “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 on obeying His orders and executing His will.” Urging William P. Fessenden to become the Secretary of the Treasury, he said: “I believe that the suppression of the rebellion has been decreed by a higher power than any represented by us, and that the Almighty is using His own means to that end.”

He said to some ministers of the Christian Commission: "But I am confident that the Almighty has His plans, and will work them out; and whether we see it or not, they will be the best for us. I have always taken counsel of Him, and referred to Him my plans, and have never adopted a course of proceeding without being assured, as far as I could be, of His approbation . . . we ought to be willing to accept His decisions. We have reason to anticipate that it will be favorable to us, for our cause is right."

Ponder that last quotation, for it shows two very significant things: first, Lincoln had a very definite personal experience of dealing directly with God in prayer and in endeavoring to do His will; furthermore he had fixed Biblical convictions concerning God's attributes. The Judge of all the earth will do right. To quote himself once more: "Gentlemen, my hope of success in this struggle rests on that immutable foundation, the justice and the goodness of God; and, when events are very threatening and the prospects very dark, I hope that in some way which man cannot see, all will be well in the end, because our cause is just and God will be on our side."

Shall we not all resolve that in as much as in us lieth, we shall not disappoint Lincoln's faith in our national destiny. Hear him in his temperance speech in Springfield in 1842:

*"And when the victory shall be complete—when there shall be neither a slave nor a drunkard on the earth—how proud the title of that land which may truly claim to be the birthplace and*

*the cradle of both those revolutions that shall have ended in that victory! How nobly distinguished that people who shall have planted and nurtured to maturity both the political and moral freedom of their species!"*

At another time:

“THE RESULT IS NOT DOUBTFUL. WE SHALL NOT FAIL. IF WE STAND FIRM WE SHALL NOT FAIL. WISE COUNSELS MAY ACCELERATE, OR MISTAKES DELAY IT; BUT SOONER OR LATER THE VICTORY IS SURE TO COME.”

## CHAPTER XLII

### THANKFUL IN TRIBULATION

President Lincoln's whole administration abounded in sorrow and tribulation. There was never a moment that was free from anxiety, even in the final victory. There was no peace except the "peace that passeth understanding." During the battle of Port Hudson he was depressed in spirit and could not eat, but he said, "We have a great deal to be thankful for, for we have Vicksburg and Gettysburg already." Mrs. Pomeroy, the nurse, said, "Mr. Lincoln, prayer will do what nothing else will; can you not pray?" "Yes, I will," and taking his Bible he went to his room saying, "Pray for me." That evening there was "Good news! Good news! Port Hudson is ours! The victory is ours, and God is good." Nothing like prayer in times of trouble," reminded the nurse. "Yes, O yes—praise—prayer and praise go together," was the President's response.

But do they? Are not ten lepers cleansed for every one that even recognizes that it was the Lord's will that healed them? Remember those two angels that were sent, one to gather up the petitions of the saints, the other to gather up the thanksgivings. The former, thinking of all God's gifts, took a small basket, for people's needs were so abundantly supplied. For the same reason the other took a large basket, but each was disappointed, for there were no end to the askings, and

the thanksgivings required no basket. The angel could have carried them home in one hand.

Among the official papers of Lincoln's administration there are three proclamations calling the nation to fasting and prayer, and four proclamations setting apart special days of Thanksgiving, and two annual Thanksgiving proclamations, a custom inaugurated by President Lincoln. A seventh Thanksgiving proclamation for the final victory was in process of preparation when he was assassinated. Not a bad score, 7-3. The texts given hereafter are taken from Lincoln's Complete Works.

April 10, 1862, Mr. Lincoln issued his first proclamation recommending thanksgiving for victories :

It has pleased Almighty God to vouchsafe signal victories to the land and naval forces engaged in suppressing an internal rebellion, and at the same time to avert from our country the danger of foreign intervention and invasion:

It is therefore recommended to the people of the United States that, at their next weekly assemblages in their accustomed places of public worship which shall occur after notice of this proclamation shall have been received, 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 for our national counsels, to the end that they may speedily result in the restoration of peace, harmony, and unity throughout our borders, and hasten the establishment of fraternal relations among all the countries of the earth.

On July 15, 1863, President Lincoln issued an-

other thanksgiving proclamation:

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 the 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 May 9, 1864, Mr. Lincoln issued his third recommendation for special thanksgiving and

prayer :

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.

The first Thursday of August was proclaimed a national day of prayer on July 7, 1864 and the national prayer meeting was followed a month later, September 3, 1864, by a proclamation of thanksgiving, as follows :

The signal success that Divine Providence has recently vouchsafed to the operations of the United States fleet and army in the harbor of Mobile, and the reduction of Fort Powell, Fort Gaines, and Fort Morgan, and the glorious achievements of the army under Major-General Sherman, in the State of Georgia, resulting in the capture of the city of Atlanta, call for devout acknowledgment to the Supreme Being in whose hands are the destinies of nations. It is therefore requested that on next Sunday, in all places of worship in the United States, thanksgiving be offered to Him for His mercy in preserving our national existence against the insurgent rebels who have been waging a cruel war against the Government of the United States for its overthrow; 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 efforts of public enemies and secret foes.

Abraham Lincoln's proclamation for the first regular annual Thanksgiving Day was issued October 3, 1863, as follows:

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.

October 20, 1864, Mr. Lincoln issued a proclamation for a second annual Thanksgiving on the last Thursday of November.

It has pleased Almighty God to prolong our national life another year, defending us with His guardian care against unfriendly designs from abroad, and vouchsafing to us in His mercy many and signal victories over the enemy, who is of our own household. It has also pleased our Heavenly Father to favor as well our citizens in their



homes as our soldiers in their camps, and our sailors in the rivers and seas, with unusual health. He has largely augmented our free population by emancipation and by immigration, while he has opened to us new sources of wealth, and has crowned the labor of our working-men in every department of industry with abundant rewards. Moreover, He has been pleased to animate and inspire our minds and hearts with fortitude, courage, and resolution sufficient for the great trial of civil war into which we have been brought by our adherence as a nation to the cause of freedom and humanity, and to afford to us reasonable hopes of an ultimate and happy deliverance from all our dangers and afflictions.

Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do hereby appoint and set apart the last Thursday of November next as a day which I desire to be observed by all my fellow-citizens, wherever they may then be, as a day of thanksgiving and praise to Almighty God, the beneficent Creator and Ruler of the Universe. And I do further recommend to my fellow-citizens aforesaid, that on that occasion 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 throughout the land which it has pleased Him to assign as a dwelling-place for ourselves and for our posterity throughout all generations.

In addition to all these calls to public thanksgiving, there was in each of Lincoln's messages to Congress some acknowledgment of God's kindly providential care of the nation. His first message to the Thirty-seventh Congress closes: "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."

The following is taken from President Lin-

coln's first annual message to Congress, December 3, 1861.

In the midst of unprecedented political troubles we have cause of great gratitude to God for unusual good health and most abundant harvests. . . . 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 in the great task which events have devolved upon us.”

The following paragraphs are from his 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.

After discussing the proposed Proclamation of Emancipation, he said in closing:

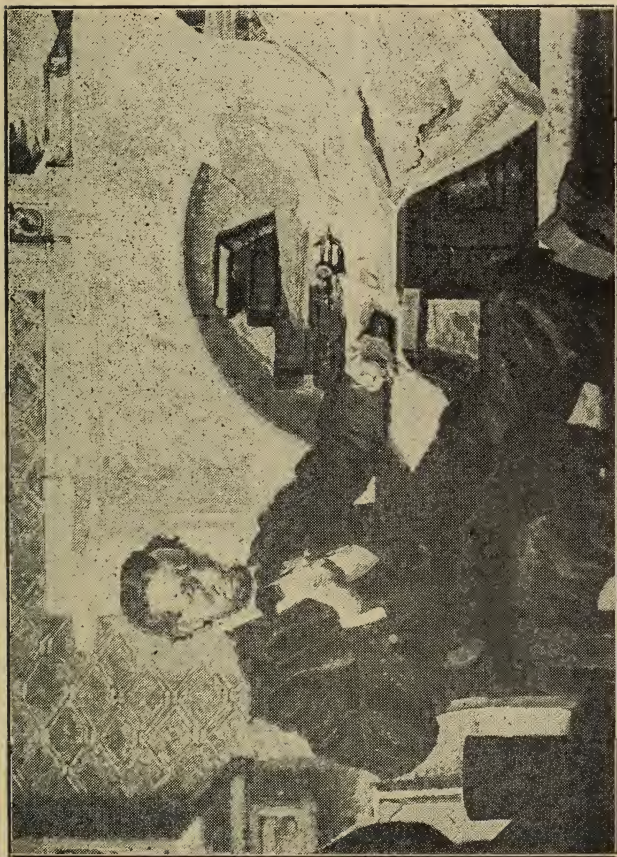
We know how to save the Union. The world knows we do know how to save it. We—even we here—hold the power and bear the responsibility. In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free—honorable alike in what we give and what we preserve. We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last, best hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just—a way which if followed, the world will forever applaud and God must forever bless.

From his third annual message to congress, December 8, 1863:

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.

These words are found in his fourth annual message to Congress, December 6, 1864.

Again the blessings of health and abundant harvests claim our profoundest gratitude to Almighty God.”



Writing the Thanksgiving Proclamation  
Courtesy of the Lincoln Insurance Co.

## CHAPTER XLIII

### GOD'S LISTENING POST

In the divinely inspired story of the Apostle Paul's life there comes a time where he seems to have been almost bewildered. Certain doors to further missionary efforts slammed in his face one after another, and then suddenly there was the vision of the man from Macedonia,—Luke, some think—calling to him: "Come over into Macedonia and help us," and "straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that God has called us to preach the Gospel unto them." Even Paul had to stop, look, and listen to know what the will of the Lord was.

"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." So spoke President Lincoln to L. E. Chittendon. To a delegation of Chicago ministers who on September 13, 18662, were urging him to free the slaves immediately, pleading that it was the will of God, Lincoln replied, "I hope it will not be irreverent for me to say that if it is probable that God would reveal His will to others on a point so connected with my duty, it might be supposed He would reveal it directly to me; for unless I am more deceived in myself than I often am, it is my earnest desire to know the will of Providence in this matter. And if I can learn what it is, I will do it. These, however, are not the days of miracles, and I sup-

pose it will be granted that I am not to expect a direct revelation. I must study the plain physical facts of the case, ascertain what is possible to be wise and right."

At that moment the Emancipation Proclamation was lying locked in the President's desk, but he could not give them the satisfaction of telling them so. He was waiting for a military victory, according to his covenant with God. But their visit was not without its effect for Lincoln was listening intensely for God's voice, and shortly after the Proclamation had been issued on September 22 (nine days after their visit), Joseph Medill, editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, brought these ministers a message from Secretary Stanton that their "interview finished the business. After that there was no more manifestation of doubt or talk of delay. Mr. Lincoln's mind was fully made up."

Indeed there were many voices, as Lincoln said, "I am approached with the most opposite opinions and advice, and that by religious men who are equally certain that they represent the Divine will." But also "on many a defeated field there was a voice louder than the thundering of cannon. It was the voice of God, crying, 'Let my people go.'" So it is not unreasonable to suppose that Lincoln, having as he said, "an earnest desire to know the will of Providence" concerning the freeing of the slaves, would give much weight to the following incident, coming at the very time when he was about to make that momentous decision.

Isaac and Sarah Harvey, very devout Quakers, resided in Clinton County, Ohio, about fifty miles northwest of Cincinnati. They were ardent abolitionists and Isaac was so obedient to "the movings of the Spirit" that his neighbors, who held him in reverence and esteem, regarded him as very eccentric in some of his religious convictions and conduct. In 1868 Mrs. Nellie Blessing-Eyster, who now resides in Berkeley, California, visited the Harveys and received from Isaac, who had become blind, an account of an interview with President Lincoln in September, 1862. The story as told by Mrs. Eyster is here published by her permission and is as follows:

Folding his thin hands, his face wearing an expression of sweet gravity, and his words coming slowly as if he were weighing the value of each, he said:

"I will answer thy question. My quiet life has known few storms. I have loved God as my first, best and dearest friend, and He has ever dealt most tenderly with me. During the first years of the great rebellion, when I read and heard of the condition of the poor crushed Negroes, I tried to think it was a cunning device of bad men to create greater enmity between the North and the South; but when I read Lincoln's speeches, I thought so good and wise a man could not be deceived, and then I resolved to go and see for myself. At one of our First-day meetings I spoke of my intention, but although the brethren felt as I did upon the subject they said it was rash for me to expose my life, for I could do no good. Nevertheless I went, traveling on horseback through most of the Southland.

"Often my life was in danger from guerrillas, but there was always an unseen arm between me and the actual foe, and in a few weeks I returned, saying the half had not been told of the sufferings of these poor, despised, yet God-fearing and God-trusting people."

Here his voice trembled with the overflow of pity of which his heart seemed the fountain.

"That summer," he continued, "I plowed and reaped and gathered in my harvest as usual. Day by day I

prayed, at home and in the field, that God would show His delivering power as He had to the children of Israel. Nothing seemed to come in answer. Occasionally during the beginning of the war, news reached us that battles had been fought by the Northern men and victories won, but still the poor colored people were not let go.

“One day while plowing I heard a voice, whether inside me or outside of me I know not, but I was awake. It said, ‘Go thou and see the President.’ I answered, ‘Yea, Lord, Thy servant heareth.’ And unhitching my plow, I went at once to the house and said to Mother, ‘Wilt thou go with me to Washington to see the President?’

“ ‘Who sends thee?’ she asked.

“ ‘The Lord,’ I answered.

“ ‘Where thou goest I will go,’ said Mother, and began to make ready.

“My friends called me crazed; some said that this trip would be more foolish than the first, and that I, who had never been to Washington and knew no one in it, could not gain access to the great President.

“The Lord knew I did not want to be foolhardy, but I had that on my mind which I must tell President Lincoln, and I had faith that He who feedeth the sparrows would direct me.

“We left here on the 17th of the ninth month, 1862, the first time Mother had been fifty miles from home in sixty years. It was a pleasant morning. Before we left the house we prayed that God would direct our wandering, or, if He saw best, direct us to return. Part of our journey was by stage. Every one looked at and spoke to us kindly. Oh, God’s world is beautiful when we see the invisible in it.

“We got to Washington the next evening. It was about early candle light, and there was so much confusion at the depot and on the street that Mother clung to my arm saying: ‘Oh Isaac, we ought not to have come here! It looks like Babylon!’

“ ‘But the Lord will help us if we have faith that we

are doing His will,' I replied, and we walked away from the cars.

"Under a lamp-post there stood a noble-looking man, reading a letter. I stepped before him and said: 'Good friend, wilt thou tell us where to find President Lincoln?'

"He looked us all over before he spoke. We were neat and clean, and soon his face got bright and smiling, and he asked us a few plain questions. I told him we were Friends from Ohio who had come all of these weary miles to say a few words with President Lincoln, because the Lord had sent us.

"He nodded his head and said, 'I understand.' Then he took us to a large house called Willard's Hotel, and up to a little room away from all the noise.

" 'Stay here,' he said, 'and I will see when the President can admit you.'

"He was gone a long time, but meanwhile a young man brought us up a nice supper, which Mother said was very hospitable in him, and when the gentleman returned he handed me a slip of paper upon which was written, 'Admit the bearer to the chamber of the President at 9:30 o'clock tomorrow morning.' My heart was so full of gratitude that I could not express my thanksgiving in words. That night was as peaceful as those at home in the meadows.

"The next morning the kind gentleman came and conducted us to the house nearby in which the President lived. Every one whom we met seemed to know our conductor and took off their hats to him. I was glad that he had so many friends. At the door of the big porch he left us, promising to return in an hour. 'You must make your talk with him brief,' he said. 'A big battle has just been fought at Antietam. The North is victorious but at least 12,000 men have been killed or wounded, and the President, like the rest of us, is in great trouble.'

"I did not speak. I could not. The room into which we were first shown was full of people, all waiting, we supposed, to see the President. 'Ah, Isaac, we shall not get near him today. See the anxious faces who come



before us,' whispered Mother.

" 'As God wills,' I said.

"It was a sad place to be in, truly. There were soldiers' wives and wounded soldiers sitting around the large room, and not a soul but from whom joy and peace seemed to have fled. Some were weeping; soldiers with clanking spurs and short swords were rapidly walking through the halls; men with newspapers in their hands were reading the news from the seat of war, and the President's house seemed the center of the world. I felt what a solemn thing it must be to have so much power."

Here Uncle Isaac's voice got husky and tears fell from his sightless eyes upon his wrinkled hands. I reverently brushed them off, and in a few minutes he continued:

"When the summons came for us to enter—it was an advance of the others—my knees smote together, and for an instant I tottered. 'Keep heart, Isaac,' Mother whispered, and we went forward. I fear thou wilt think me vain if I tell what followed."

"No fear, Uncle Isaac. Please proceed."

"It seemed so wonderful that, for a moment, I could not realize it. To think that such humble people as we were should be there in the actual presence of the greatest and best man in the world, and to be received by him as kindly as if he were our own son, made me feel very strange. He shook hands with us and put his chair between us. Oh, how I honored the good man! But I said:

'Wilt thou pardon me that I do not remove my hat?' Then he smiled, and his grave face lit up as he said, 'Certainly. I understand it all.' The dear, dear man . . .'" and again Uncle Isaac stopped as though to revel, as a devout nun counts her beads, in the memory of that interview.

But I was impatient. "What then, sir?" The answer came with a solemnity indescribable. My curiosity and his reminiscence were not in harmony.

"Of that half hour it does not become me to speak. I will think of it gratefully throughout eternity. At last

we had to go. The President took a hand of each of us saying, 'I thank you for this visit. May God bless you.' Was there ever greater condescension than that? Just then I asked him if he would object to writing just a line or two, certifying that I had fulfilled my mission, so that I could show it to the council at home. He sat down to his table.

"Wilt thou open the drawer of that old secretary in the corner behind thee, and hand me a little box from therein?"

Up to that moment I had not noticed my surroundings. The old-fashioned furniture was oiled and rubbed, and a large secretary which belonged to the Colonial period was conspicuous. I obeyed instructions, and soon placed in the old man's now trembling fingers a small square tin box which was as bright as silver. Between two layers of cotton was a folded paper, already yellow. The words were verbatim these:

"I take pleasure in asserting that I have had profitable intercourse with friend Isaac Harvey and his good wife, Sarah Harvey. May the Lord comfort them as they have sustained me.

September 19, 1862

Abraham Lincoln."

"Uncle Isaac!" I exclaimed. "I can hardly realize that away off here in the backwoods I should read such words traced by Mr. Lincoln's own hands. How singular!"

"Not more so than the whole event was to us, dear child, from the first to the last. The following Second-day the preliminary Proclamation of Emancipation was issued. Thank God! Thank God!"

It is not possible to depict the devout fervor of the old patriarch's thanksgiving.

"Our new friend was waiting at the outside door when we came out. I showed him the testimonial. He nodded his head affirmatively and said, 'It is well.'

"We soon left Washington, for our work was done and I longed for the quiet of home. Our friend took us to the omnibus which conveyed us to the cars, having

treated us with a gracious hospitality which I can never forget. May the Lord care for him as he cared for us."

"Did you not learn his name?" I inquired, wondering what official in those days would have bestowed so much time and courtesy upon these unpretending folk.

"Yes, he is high in esteem of men and they call him Salmon P. Chase."

In connection with this remarkable story, the validity of which cannot be questioned, it is interesting to note that the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation issued a few days after the visit of Isaac and Sarah Harvey as stated on preceding pages was submitted to the Cabinet by President Lincoln nearly two months before, and was at that time withheld from publication by the President that it might be issued in connection with the announcement of a great victory in the field. It is however, certain that by his interview with the Harveys, Mr. Lincoln was encouraged and strengthened in his purposes to take that important step.<sup>1</sup>

Further evidence of President Lincoln's alertness at his listening post is furnished by the Jaquess-Gilmore peace mission of which a mere summary can be given here. Colonel Jaquess of the 73rd Illinois Volunteers was the Methodist minister who formerly had preached so effectively to Mr. Lincoln on the text "Ye must be born again." In May, 1863 while serving under General Rosecrans in the army of the Cumberland, he feels strongly that he is commissioned of God to go to Jefferson Davis on a mission of reconciliation. "I want to go to them to offer them the olive branch; to tell them in the name of God that they will be welcomed back. . . . I do not know what their views are; it is not my business to ask. I feel that God has laid upon me the duty to go to

<sup>1</sup>Ervin Chapman, *Latest Light on Abraham Lincoln*, pp. 511-517. Revell Company, used by permission.

them and go I must, unless my superiors forbid it. I propose no compromise with traitors, but their immediate return to their allegiance to God and their country." "How will you go?" "Openly, in my uniform as the messenger of God." Since his proposed mission is as a representative of God, not of Washington, D. C., he is told he may be shot as a spy, having no official papers. "It is not for me to ask what they will do. I have only to go." "Your life is too valuable to waste on such a fool's errand." He replied, "That is not for you to judge." In his letter to Lincoln he urges that it will test Davis' piety so reputed in England and in the North and says: "My dear Mr. Lincoln will excuse me when I say that I am ready for any emergency, and though not Samson, I should, like him (*if shot or hanged*), slay more at my death than in all my life at the head of my regiment. No, the mission cannot fail. God's hand is in it. I am not seeking a martyr's crown, but simply to meet the duty that has been laid upon me."

Both Lincoln and Rosecrans favored the unofficial venture, and while both doubted that it would accomplish Jaquess' purpose, they believed "good would come of it." Mr. James R. Gilmore of the *New York Tribune* who acted as go-between for Jaquess and Lincoln reports Mr. Lincoln's reaction to the proposal:

I fear that we can come to no adjustment. I fear the war must go on till the North and South have both drunk of the cup to the very dregs, till both have worked out in pain and grief and bitter humiliation the sin of two hundred years. It has seemed to me that God so wills it; and the first gleam I have had of a hope to the contrary

is in this letter of Jaquess. This thing, irregular as it is, may mean that the Higher Powers are about to take a hand in this business and bring about a settlement.

I want peace. I want to stop this terrible waste of life and property, and I know Colonel Jaquess well, and I see that working in the way he proposes he may be able to bring influences to bear upon Davis that he cannot well resist, and thus pave the way for an honorable settlement. . . . He proposes here to speak to them in the name of the Lord; and he says he feels that God's hand is in it, and He has laid the duty upon him. Now if he feels that he has that kind of authority, he cannot fail to affect the element on which he expects to operate. . . . Such talk in you or me might sound fanatical, but in Jaquess it is simply natural and sincere. And I am not at all sure that he is not right. God selects His own instruments and sometimes they are queer ones, for instance, He chose me to steer the ship through a great crisis. . . . He (Jaquess) can do no more than open the door for further negotiations, which would have to be conducted with me here in a regular way.

Here is a man, cool, deliberate, God-fearing, of exceptional sagacity and worldly wisdom, who undertakes a project that strikes you and me as utterly chimerical; he attempts to bring about, single-handed and on his own hook, a peace between two great sections. Moreover, he gets it into his head that God has laid this work upon him, and he is willing to stake his life upon that conviction. The impulse on him is overpowering, as it was upon Luther, when he said, "God help me. I can do no otherwise."

Can you account for this except on his own supposition that God is in it. And if that be so, something will come out of it, perhaps not what Jaquess expects but what will be of service to the right. So, though there is risk about it, I shall let him go.<sup>2</sup>

Col. Jaquess started on his mission in July,

<sup>2</sup>Ervin Chapman, *Latest Light on Abraham Lincoln*, pp. 94-95.

1863, was received kindly, almost enthusiastically within the Confederate lines, but failed to reach the Confederate President, having no official papers. His communications to President Lincoln failed to get past his secretaries who knew nothing of the affair, so he returned to his regiment. Later President Lincoln persuaded Mr. Gilmore, who had guffawed at Jaquess' proposal, to go on the same mission, which he consented to do if he might have Jaquess with his honest countenance, sincere heart, divine commission, and undaunted courage to accompany him as credentials. Gilmore, unknown to Jaquess, carried in his mind Lincoln's unofficial terms of peace, and generous terms they were: restoration of the Union, the emancipation of the slaves, compensation to their owners, amnesty and restoration to full citizenship of those in rebellion, and reorganization.

It was July, 1864 before the expedition was ready to start and marvelous changes had taken place since Colonel Jaquess' first effort. It was attempted when the outlook for the North was the darkest, and overtures for peace, even unofficial ones, would certainly have failed. But now the situation was reversed and the outlook for the South was hopeless, except for the clamor for peace in the North.

Jaquess and Gilmore, strangely enough, reached Richmond and were admitted to an interview with Jefferson Davis but he was adamant. "We are not fighting for slavery. We are fighting for independence and that, or extermination, we will have." When they pointed out that the South

had but four millions against twenty, he said, "I do not so read the returns of your recent elections. To my mind they show that fully one-half of your people think we are right and would fight for us if they had the opportunity." He was partly right and another election was only four months away, and President Lincoln's chances for re-election were getting fewer every day, until even his campaign manager advised him to compromise the slavery question with the South, or he would be swamped at the polls.

But the Jaquess-Gilmore mission had put Jefferson Davis in a straight betwixt two: if he held them in prison, the whole world would be asking why innocent men should be so treated; if he let them return home, they would declare that the South would accept no terms but independence, and Lincoln would be re-elected, and their case would be hopeless. And that is just what happened. Gilmore was a literary man, and he published an article in the September *Atlantic Monthly* that formed the basis of almost all the Republican campaign speeches. And Lincoln was re-elected with an electoral vote of 212 to 21. But when the popular vote is analyzed, it appears that in enough states to have reversed the result, the vote was so close that the change of one-half of one per cent would have swung the election to McClellan.

"Some good came" of Jaquess' divine call, and Mr. Lincoln's readiness to listen to God's voice. Dr. Ervin Chapman in his "Latest Light on Abraham Lincoln" reminds us that "Victor Hugo

tells us that the Battle of Waterloo was decided by a shepherd boy shaking his head in answer to a question by Napoleon. There are times when the contending forces are so nearly equal that a very small accession of power on either side will win a victory." But the results of that election were probably more momentous than the Battle of Waterloo.



## CHAPTER XLIV

### “THE DUTY OF NATIONS”

Just what is the relation of the Almighty God, of whom Lincoln so often spoke, to our nation and the other nations of the world? Some say that religion must not meddle in politics, and even go so far as to say that nations are not subject to God's moral law. Is the Creator of the heavens and the earth to be confronted with a “Verboten” sign on all legislative and judicial halls? Others say that we may speak of God in such assemblies, for all nations have a conception of God, but not of the Lord Jesus Christ; that would be discourteous to the Jew, the Mohammedan and all pagans. Has the Jew more power than He to whom “all authority has been given”? Is he more deserving of the courtesies of the floor? ‘He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father” who appointed Him King.

When on March 4, 1863, the Senate of the United States passed the Harlan resolution petitioning President Lincoln “to designate and set apart a day for National prayer and humiliation,” “in this day of trouble . . . to seek Him for succor according to His appointed way, through Jesus Christ,” the President responded with a proclamation opening with these words:

“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 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.

Note the italicized words. Later in the same proclamation he says: "*But we have forgotten God.*" That sentence is the theme of the whole third paragraph.

The following letter of the Rev. Dr. A. M. Miligan to President-elect James A. Garfield is quoted here because of its reference to correspondence and a private interview with President Lincoln on this very subject:

McClure Avenue, Allegheny, Pa.,  
October 25, 1880.

Hon. J. A. Garfield,

Dear Sir: I am encouraged to write you from a long and pleasant interview with our mutual friend, Hon. Samuel Plumb, of Streator, Ill. I have deferred writing until assured that you are quite certain to be our next President.

I have no favors to ask for myself or my friends, but I wish to speak a word to you for the honor of our common Lord and Master, and for the welfare of our common country. So far as I can ascertain, you are to be the first Chief Magistrate who, at the time of his election, was a member of a Christian church. I believe that your nomination and election have been providentially brought about in answer to earnest prayer.

Permit me to call your attention to the fact that the framers of the Constitution of our country, in their effort

to form a government that should be neutral in religion, have given us a Constitution that is devoid of a single allusion to God, or His law, or His authority in the nation. Even the oath prescribed for you to take when inaugurated in office does not contain the appeal to God, which is the very essence of the oath. It was so framed in order that an Atheist might consistently swear it; but can a Christian consistently swear it?

When General Washington was inaugurated, after the Chief Justice had read to him the prescribed form of the oath, lifting the Bible to his lips, he added the words, "So help me God." From his time till President Hayes, no President, so far as I can learn, ever used the appeal to God in taking the oath; but took it simply as framed in the Constitution. Previous to President Lincoln's inauguration, I wrote to him on the matter, and asked him to honor God in taking the oath. He sent me a kindly reply, saying that he would gladly comply with my request, but as he entered on his office under critical circumstances, he did not feel at liberty to depart from the letter of the Constitution. In a private interview afterwards, he expressed his hope that as his first administration had purged slavery out of the Constitution, his second might secure a proper recognition of God in it.

With distinguished consideration and high regard,

Your most obedient servant,

A. M. MILLIGAN.<sup>1</sup>

The "private interview" with President Lincoln of which he speaks may or may not refer to an official appointment of himself and the Rev. Dr. J. R. W. Sloane of New York to confer with the President, which they did on December 12, 1862, on the eve of the final Emancipation Proclamation. Some paragraphs of Dr. Sloane's address to the President are here quoted:

We visit you, Mr. President, as the representatives of

<sup>1</sup>Our Banner, February, 1886, pp. 39-40.

the Reformed Presbyterian, or, as it is frequently termed, "Scotch Covenanter," Church,—a Church whose sacrifices and sufferings in the cause of civil and religious liberty are a part of the world's history, and to which we are indebted, no less than to the Puritans, for those inestimable privileges so largely enjoyed in the free States of this Union, and which, true to its high lineage and ancient spirit, does not hold within its pale a single Secessionist, or sympathizer with rebellion, in these United States. . . .

As an anti-slavery church of the most radical school, believing slavery to be a heinous and aggravated sin both against God and man, and to be placed in the same category with piracy, murder, adultery, and theft, it is our solemn conviction that God by His Word and Providence is calling the nation to immediate, unconditional, and universal emancipation. We hear His voice in these thunders of war saying to us, "Let my people go." Nevertheless, we have hailed with delighted satisfaction the several steps which you have taken in the direction of emancipation. Especially do we rejoice in your late proclamation, declaring your purpose to free the slaves in the rebel States on the first day of January, 1863, an act which, when carried out, will give the death-blow to rebellion, strike the fetters from millions of bondmen, and will secure for its author a place high among the wisest of rulers and the noblest benefactors of the race. Permit us, then, Mr. President, most respectfully yet most earnestly, to urge upon you the importance of enforcing that proclamation to the utmost extent of that power with which you are vested. Let it be placed on the highest grounds of Christian justice and philanthropy; let it be declared to be an act of national repentance for long complicity with the guilt of slavery. Permit nothing to tarnish the glory of the act, or rob it of its sublime moral significance and grandeur, and it cannot fail to meet a hearty response in the conscience of the nation, and to secure infinite blessings to our distracted country. Let

not the declaration of the immortal Burke in this instance be verified: "Good works are commonly left in a rude and imperfect state through the tame circumspection with which a timid prudence so frequently enervates beneficence. In doing good we are cold, languid, and sluggish, and of all things afraid of being too much in the right." We urge you by every consideration drawn from the Word of God and the present condition of our bleeding country, not to be moved from the path of duty, on which you have so auspiciously entered, either by the threats or blandishments of the enemies of human progress, nor to permit this great act to lose its power through the fears of its timid friends.

There is another point which we esteem of prominent importance, and to which we wish briefly to call your attention. The Constitution of the United States contains no acknowledgment of the authority of God, of His Christ, or of His law as contained in the Holy Scriptures. This we deeply deplore, as wholly inconsistent with all claims to be considered a Christian nation, or to enjoy the protection and favor of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is above all earthly rulers. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords. He is the one Mediator between God and man, through whom alone either nation or individuals can secure the favor of the Most High God, who is saying to us in these judgments, "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings! be instructed, O ye judges of the earth! serve the Lord with fear. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath be kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that trust in him. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted."

This time appears to us most opportune for calling the nation to a recognition of the name and authority of God, to the claims of Him who will overturn, overturn, and overturn, until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. We indulge the hope, Mr. President, that you have been called, with

your ardent love of liberty, your profound moral convictions manifested in your Sabbath proclamation, and in your frequent declarations of dependence upon Divine Providence, to your present position of honor and influence, to free our beloved country from the curse of slavery, and secure for it the favor of the great Ruler of the universe. Shall we not now set the world an example of a Christian State governed, not by the principles of mere political expediency, but acting under a sense of accountability to God, and in obedience to those laws of immutable morality which are binding alike upon nations and individuals?

We pray that you may be directed in your responsible position by divine wisdom, that God may throw over you the shield of His protection, that we may soon see rebellion crushed, its cause removed, and our land become Immanuel's land.

This delegation reported to their Church that the address was kindly received by the President who expressed satisfaction that the first objective of this church was about to be realized, and his hope that he might assist in carrying out the second as well. It is interesting to note here that President Lincoln later used a sentence from this address almost verbatim,—“We hear His voice in these thunders of war saying to us, ‘Let my people go’.”

On February 10, 1864, on the eve of President Lincoln's second inaugural, a committee of twenty-one from the National Reform Association, with the Rev. J. H. McIlwain of Newark, N. J., as chairman, visited the President and likewise urged the President to commend to Congress a permanent recognition of the Nation's Supreme Ruler and Mediator, such as both the Senate and the

President had already done in a less permanent way. "Abraham Lincoln listened with profound attention. His reply to the committee, as reported by the Rev. H. H. George, was:

"Gentlemen, you have come here on a great errand. We are going through a terrible war to secure the rights of men. The next step will be to acknowledge the rights of God. And I, as soon as I see my way clear, will recommend the same to Congress."

President Lincoln, as we know, did not live to fulfill the high aims and purposes upon which he had resolved for his second term of administration, but knowing his honesty and his religious convictions, can we doubt the sincerity of his intentions? The Honorable Schuyler Colfax, Speaker of the National House of Representatives, in a memorial address, April 24, 1865, said: "Nor should I forget to mention that the last act of Congress ever 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 coin." How fitting that the Lincoln penny, the coin of the realm of us "common people," bears Lincoln's image, and this superscription!

## CHAPTER XLV

### WHY WAS LINCOLN MURDERED?

Who killed Abraham Lincoln? "That's an easy one; John Wilkes Booth. Ask me another." Why was Lincoln murdered? But your answer to the first question is too simple. In addition to Booth, who was shot to death, four persons were hanged for complicity in the assassination, four received prison sentences, and one escaped to the Vatican and was later acquitted by a "fixed" jury that was divided. He was equally guilty with Booth except for the shooting. And of course there were others implicated who received no punishment.

Why was Lincoln murdered? is a more difficult question, though for all his kindness and nobleness, he had plenty of enemies. When we go searching for motives, they are many and varied. Booth was an actor, a second rate one; here was a chance for a major role with a real theatrical setting. But that was a minor motive with him; he hated Lincoln and the things for which he stood. But Booth was also well supplied with money and credit; trace that money to its source and more motives are found. The first questions of the murder mystery detective are: Who profits by this deed? Who were his enemies? Then did these parties commit the crime themselves or did they use someone else for a tool? Who were Lincoln's enemies? Who profited by his assassination? Is "Booth" the answer?



Three books that discuss the assassination are before me. First is "Assassination of Abraham Lincoln," by Osborn H. Oldroyd, dealing mostly with the tangible facts, the time, place, manner, and with sketches of those implicated, and with the pursuit of Booth and the escape and travels of John Surratt, his co-conspirator. Naturally suspicion would turn to the South in looking for those "higher-ups" who incited the crime. Meeting an old acquaintance in Italy who addressed him by his right name, John Surratt admitted his identity, and that he was in the Lincoln assassination plot, and also declared that Jefferson Davis had incited it, that the conspirators had acted under orders of men who were not yet known. Asked if he knew Davis, he answered, No, but that he acted under the instructions of persons under Davis' immediate orders. Perhaps it should be said here that originally the plan was to kidnap President Lincoln on March 20 by one man leaping to the driver's seat and taking the reins as his carriage would be returning from an army post, and some twenty others were to join the escort as it would be headed toward the Southland, all necessary ferries and other details having been previously arranged for. The plot was discovered and foiled, and it is possible that Booth and Surratt made the other plan somewhat on their own initiative, as Surratt said he and Booth had originated the kidnap plan. During the war Surratt had been a spy in Washington, or rather a carrier of the messages which the South was always relaying to Canada. It is certain that he

was not unacquainted with the Confederate officials. But could these Confederates have been so pig-headed as to slay their one best bet, their lone hope to be dealt with leniently when their cause was irrevocably lost? Stanton, Secretary of War, had some very different ideas of how rebels ought to be treated. The South needed psychologists on their Advisory Board.

The second book on my desk is "Why Was Lincoln Murdered?" by Otto Eisenschiml. It doesn't answer its own question, but asks a lot of others and implies that perhaps the answer was best known to Secretary Stanton. Some of the questions are:

Why did Stanton refuse Lincoln the bodyguard he asked for, Major Eckert, whom Lincoln had seen "break five pokers over his arm"?

Why was the negligence of John F. Parker, who was guarding the door of Lincoln's box at the theater, not exposed?

Why were the roads North so carefully policed on the night of the assassination, and the roads South left open for Booth's escape?

Why were the eight prisoners before their trials gagged with canvas hoods, making it impossible for them to carry on conversation, when they should have been allowed to talk? The hoods were a torture.

After more than four hundred pages of material not creditable to either President Johnson or Stanton, or to the military tribunal that tried the conspirators, the author confesses that he has nothing but circumstantial evidence that "would

stand no chance of surviving in a legal attack.”

The third book to be examined is “Fifty Years in the Church of Rome,” by Father Chiniquy, an ex-priest. The assassination of Lincoln was a Jesuit conspiracy, is his thesis. The motive was to destroy the United States whom Rome has always hated because in seven crucial points the American Constitution is contrary to the teachings of Catholicism in these particulars: (1) Equality, (2) Liberty of Conscience, (3) Separation of Church and State, (4) Tolerance of Opinions, (5) Universal Education, (6) Freedom of Worship, (7) Democracy. He furnishes the documentary proofs. Lincoln had defended Chiniquy in a lawsuit in which Jesuit priests were persecuting him, so that they had a personal grudge. The story had been printed in many of the Democratic papers that Lincoln had been raised a Catholic but had become a heretic and there is always an open season on heretics. This was an attempt to alienate the Catholics from supporting him, and opened the way for assassination. The Pope had addressed a more than friendly letter to Jefferson Davis, calling him his son, the only recognition of the Confederacy by any foreign power. The riots in New York City were insurrections, “the work of Bishop Hughes and his emissaries.” The plot of the assassination was formed in Mrs. Surratt’s house where the Jesuit priests were constant visitors. Mrs. Surratt was the one woman hanged in the execution, and her son John fled to Canada where he was hidden for months by priests, and eventually put on the boat

for Europe, and landed finally in the Vatican. When he was discovered, extradition was readily granted, but he escaped from six guards, but was finally apprehended and returned to America where he was tried in a civil court, with a jury made up of Southerners and Catholics, and escaped conviction by eight jurors voting for acquittal. Such are some of the theses set forth by this much-persecuted ex-Romanist. No doubt he was prejudiced, and some of his conclusions may have been colored by his years of bitter experience.

On three occasions Chiniquy went to Washington to urge the President to guard himself against assassination. In their discussion of the forces behind the war, Mr. Chiniquy reports the President to have said:

I will repeat to you what I said at Urbana, when for the first time you told me your fears lest I would be assassinated by the Jesuits. "Man must not care where and when he will die, provided he dies at the post of honor and duty." But I may add, today, that I have a presentiment that God will call me to Him through the hand of an assassin. Let His will, and not mine, be done! . . . I will be forever grateful for the warning words you have addressed to me about the dangers ahead to my life, from Rome. I know that they are not imaginary dangers. If I were fighting against a Protestant South, as a nation, there would be no danger of assassination. The nations who read the Bible, fight bravely on the battlefields, but they do not assassinate their enemies. The Pope and the Jesuits, with their infernal Inquisition, are the only organized power in the world which have recourse to the dagger of the assassin to murder those whom they cannot convince with their arguments, or conquer with the sword.

Unfortunately, I feel more and more, every day, that it

is not against the Americans of the South, alone, I am fighting, it is more against the Pope of Rome, his perfidious Jesuits and their blind and blood-thirsty slaves, than against the real American Protestants, that we have to defend ourselves. Here is the real danger of our position. So long as they will hope to conquer the North, they will spare me; but the day we will rout their armies (and the day will surely come, with the help of God), take their cities, and force them to submit; then, it is my impression that the Jesuits, who are the principal rulers of the South, will do what they have almost invariably done in the past. The dagger or the pistol of one of their adepts will do what the strong hands of the warriors could not achieve. This civil war seems to be nothing but a political affair to those who do not see, as I do, the secret springs of that terrible drama. But it is more a religious than a civil war. It is Rome who wants to rule and degrade the North, as she has ruled and degraded the South, from the very day of its discovery. There are only very few of the Southern leaders who are not more or less under the influence of the Jesuits, through their wives, family relations and their friends. Several members of the family of Jeff Davis belong to the Church of Rome. Even the Protestant ministers are under the influence of the Jesuits without suspecting it. To keep her ascendancy in the North, as she does in the South, Rome is doing here what she has done in Mexico, and in all the South American Republics; she is paralyzing, by a civil war, the arms of the soldiers of Liberty. She divides our nation, in order to weaken, subdue and rule it.

Surely we have some brave and reliable Roman Catholic officers and soldiers in our armies, but they form an insignificant minority when compared with the Roman Catholic traitors against whom we have to guard ourselves, day and night. The fact is, that the immense majority of the Roman Catholic bishops, priests and laymen, are rebels in heart, when they cannot be in fact; with very few exceptions, they are publicly in favor of slavery.

I understand, now, why the patriots of France, who determined to see the colors of Liberty floating over their great and beautiful country, were forced to hang or shoot almost all the priests and the monks as the irreconcilable enemies of Liberty. For it is a fact, which is now evident to me, that, with very few exceptions, every priest and every true Roman Catholic is a determined enemy of Liberty.<sup>1</sup>

Who killed Abraham Lincoln? Was it John Wilkes Booth? Or was he just a tool? And if so, whose tool? Was he the dagger of the giant Slavery who in his dying throes saw through his glassing eyes the boy now grown to manhood, the boy who once looked on him in all his loathsomeness, and said, "By the Eternal God, if ever I get a chance to hit that thing I'll hit it hard; I will get ready and some day my chance will come." Seeing Lincoln about to take the giant's sword and cut off his head, he throws the dagger and smites the smiter. Was Booth the tool of some ambitious politician who thought he saw in the death of his superior a chance for his own rise to power? Was he the tool of some monstrous power that would stay the progress of freedom and liberty and education and brotherhood and democracy? Who crucified Jesus Christ? Was it the four soldiers who each drove a nail through a hand or a foot, and drew their pay in his blood-stained garments? Was it Pilate or Herod, Annas or Caiaphas, Jew or Gentile, Pharisee or Saducee? Or were they all just tools of the forces of evil, determined that every inch of progress shall be bought with precious blood?

<sup>1</sup>C. Chiniquy, *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*, pp. 695-697

Peter said to the Jews: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God, Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have slain." It was God's will but their responsibility. So would Lincoln have said. "Man must not care where and when he will die, provided he dies at the post of duty. But I may add, today, that I have a presentiment that God will call me to Him through the hand of an assassin. Let His will, and not mine, be done."

## CHAPTER XLVI

### HIS HOPE OF A FUTURE LIFE

It is told of certain persons that they would not permit any one to speak of death or of a life after death in their presence. Andrew Carnegie was such an one. William Randolph Hurst was another. One might suspect that any one so unwilling to entertain even a thought of a future life either had some inward questionings about his past and his present life, or that he had neglected to engage a capable Advocate to represent him in the court of the Supreme Judge. Glib, brazen confidence, however, is no proof of readiness for death. But the future life was a matter to which Mr. Lincoln looked forward with pleasant anticipation and faithful preparation. Constantly aware of his accountability, he had lived in all good conscience, and the final Court of Review had no terrors for him.

When people criticised unkindly and unjustly he found refuge in the knowledge that He that is higher than the highest regardeth. Addressing the South in his first inaugural, he said: "You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to 'preserve, protect, and defend it.'" Writing to Senator Doolittle and others concerning slavery he said: "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." After signing the pardon of a young man for sleeping on sentry duty, contrary to the wishes of the military authorities as he well knew, he said: "I could not think of going into eternity with the blood of that poor young man on my skirts." Having decided to enlist colored men in the army, he said in an address to a fair in Baltimore: "Upon a clear conviction of duty I am resolved to turn that element of strength to account; and I am responsible for it to the American people, to the Christian world, to history, and in my final account to God."<sup>1</sup> His message to Congress on March 6, 1862, recommending compensated emancipation of slavery, closed with these words: "In view of my responsibility to God and my country, I earnestly beg the attention of Congress and the people to the subject."<sup>2</sup>

Lincoln not only considered that it was essential to be prepared to die, but he believed that faith in God was a most necessary part of such preparation. This comes out in a letter to Speed, his former fellow-skeptic, concerning the possible death of his young wife: "The death scenes of those we love are surely painful enough; but these we are prepared for and expect to see; they happen to all, and all know they must happen. Painful as they are, they are not an unlooked for sorrow. Should she, as you fear, be destined to an early grave, it is indeed a great consolation to

<sup>1</sup>Thompson, D. D., Abraham Lincoln, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup>Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln, Vol. VI, pp. 184, 185.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

know that she is so well prepared to meet it. Her religion which you once so disliked, I will venture you now prize most highly.”<sup>4</sup>

But the religion that prepares one for heaven, in the opinion of Mr. Lincoln, needed to be above suspicion. Two Tennessee women came to ask that their husbands who had been taken prisoners be released. In each of the three interviews, one of them urged that her husband was a very religious man. In finally yielding to their entreaties the President said to her: “You say your husband is a religious man; tell him when you meet him, that I say I am not much of a judge of religion, but that, in my opinion, the religion that sets men to rebel and fight against their government, because, as they think, that government does not sufficiently help some men to eat their bread in the sweat of other men’s faces, is not the sort of religion upon which people can get to heaven.”<sup>5</sup>

In a former chapter the evidence was given for Mr. Lincoln’s belief that there was no such thing as eternal punishment. It was not entirely conclusive. At any rate he believed in hell as at least a corrective institution, and that “the world would be better if more punishment was preached by our ministers, and not so much pardon for sin.” (*Herndon*). Instead of calling it by the name that had lost its terrible significance by reason of careless use, he seemed to visualize it when he spoke of it. Was it because he wanted it to retain its significance for himself, or for others? When urged by his peers in the Illinois

<sup>4</sup>Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln.

<sup>5</sup>D. D. Thompson, Abraham Lincoln.

legislature to vote for certain measures which had been incorporated together in a bill, to one of which measures he was opposed, he said: "You may burn my body to ashes, and scatter them to the winds of heaven; you may drag my soul down to the regions of darkness and despair to be tormented forever; but you will never get me to support a measure which I believe to be wrong, although by doing so I may accomplish that which I believe to be right."<sup>6</sup> Speaking of the obstructions that had been put around the slave to prevent his ever obtaining his freedom he said: "So far as peaceable voluntary Emancipation is concerned, the condition of the Negro slave in America, scarcely less terrible to the contemplation of a free man, is now as fixed and hopeless of change for the better, as that of the lost souls of the finally impenitent."<sup>7</sup> Toward the end of his administration, much pressure was put on the President to compromise with the South and permit them to retain their slaves. Of these efforts Lincoln: "There have been men base enough to propose to me to return to slavery the black warriors of Port Hudson and Olustee, and thus win the respect of the masters they fought. Should I do so, I should deserve to be damned in time and eternity. Come what will, I will keep my faith with friend and foe."<sup>8</sup>

In granting a postponement to Nathaniel Gordon whom he declined to pardon, he said: "In granting this respite it becomes my painful duty

<sup>6</sup>Tarbell, *Ida M., Life of Lincoln*, Vol. I, p. 139.

<sup>7</sup>Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln, V. II, p. 280.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., Vol. X, p. 191.

to admonish the prisoner that, relinquishing all expectation of pardon, he refer himself alone to the mercy of the common God and Father of all men."<sup>9</sup>

Yet Mr. Lincoln was more given to looking on death as a friend than as an enemy to be feared. He wrote to his step-brother under date of January 12, 1851: "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. 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."<sup>10</sup>

It was to this same step-brother that Lincoln wrote his gentle rebuke for suggesting that he would sell his place in heaven for seventy or eighty dollars cash in hand, a sum that he could earn with Lincoln's proffered bonus and hard work in four or five months time.

The death of Willie brought the subject of heaven very close to the President. Mrs. Keckley, Mrs. Lincoln's colored seamstress, tells that on the morning of Willie's death "Mr. Lincoln came to the bed, lifted the covers from the face of the

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., Vol. VIII, p. 96.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., Vol. II, p. 148.

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 he is much better off in heaven, but then we loved him so. It is hard, hard to have him die.' "

Willie died on a Thursday, and Mr. Lincoln began setting aside his Thursdays for mourning in solitude, until Mrs. Lincoln became alarmed for him and invited the Rev. Dr. Vinton to visit the White House to talk with him. Dr. Vinton told the President it was sinful to grieve so much over his loss and unworthy of a believer. "Your son is alive in paradise. Do you not remember that passage in the Gospels, 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him.'" Lincoln started as if from a stupor: "Alive! Alive! Surely you mock me." "No, sir, it is a most comforting doctrine of the church, founded upon the words of Christ Himself." With his arm about Dr. Vinton's neck and his head on his shoulder, Mr. Lincoln sobbed aloud, "Alive! Alive!" Dr. Vinton again reasoned from Christ's talk to the Saducees, and from the experience of Jacob who thought Joseph was dead, but God had in His providence used him for the salvation of his household. "It is a part of the Lord's plan for the ultimate happiness of you and yours. Doubt it not." Dr. Vinton offered the President a sermon on the subject which was gratefully accepted and a copy was made for the President's use. A member of the Lincoln family said that his views of spritual things changed from that hour.

But Willie was not forgotten. Some weeks

after his death the President and some Cabinet members spent some time at Fortress Monroe watching the military operations there. He was reading Shakespeare and called his secretary to listen to some of the choice passages, Hamlet's Soliloquy on the possible future life and others. Then closing the book he recited Constance's lament for her lost boy:

"And, father cardinal, I have heard you say  
That we shall all see and know our friends in  
heaven:

If that be true I shall see my boy again."

Then Lincoln said, "Colonel, did you ever dream of a lost friend, and feel that you were holding sweet communion with that friend, and yet have a sad consciousness that it was not reality? Just so I dream of my boy Willie." Then he dropped his head on the table and sobbed aloud.<sup>11</sup>

The immortality of the soul was a subject on which the President seems to have thought much and was ready to discuss it early and late. Early, as the Rev. Dr. Gurley, his pastor tells us. He and the President chatted late one night, then the President said, "Doctor, you rise early, so do I; come over tomorrow morning about seven o'clock. We can talk for an hour before breakfast." The invitation was accepted and they breakfasted together. Stepping out of the Executive Mansion, Dr. Gurley met one of his church members. "Why, Doctor, it is not nine o'clock; what are you doing at the Executive Mansion?" He replied, "Mr. Lincoln and I have been having a morning chat."

<sup>11</sup>William M. Thayer, *From Pioneer Home to White House*, pp. 356-357.

“On the war, I suppose?” “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. I have had a great many conversations with him on the subject. This morning, however, I was a listener, as Mr. Lincoln did all the talking.”<sup>12</sup>

And Mr. Lincoln talked late on the subject too. In 1856 he was in Chicago on the Rock Island bridge case and spent an evening in the home of the Hon. Norman B. Judd, which looks out on Lake Michigan. The scene was perfect as they sat watching the sailboats coming and going, and the full moon rising over the lake. After reciting impressively Read’s descriptive poem about the Bay of Naples, Mr. Lincoln went on to speak on the wonders of astronomy and of the sublime power of the Creator who spoke the limitless universe into existence, and created man with an intellect capable of discovering its laws. He said, “Surely God would not have created such a being as man, with an ability to grasp the infinite, to exist only for a day! No, man was made for immortality.”<sup>13</sup>

Such was the faith of Mr. Lincoln and such was the triumphant faith taught in his household. B. F. Carpenter, the artist who spent six months in that home tells how “Tad” took his father’s death: “Little ‘Tad’s’ frantic grief upon being told that his father had been shot was alluded to in the Washington correspondence at the time. For twenty-four hours the little fellow was per-

<sup>12</sup>D. Gurley, Unpublished Manuscript.

<sup>13</sup>Arnold, I. N., *The Layman’s Faith*, p. 29.

fectly inconsolable. Sunday morning, however, the sun rose in unclouded splendor, and in his simplicity he looked upon this as a token that his father was happy. 'Do you think my father has gone to heaven?' he asked of a gentleman who had called upon Mrs. Lincoln. 'I have not a doubt of it,' was the reply. 'Then,' he exclaimed in his broken way, 'I am glad he has gone there, for he was never very happy after he came here. This was not a good place for him.'"<sup>14</sup> That was Tad's Easter day hope.

We are glad that Abraham Lincoln had such a blessed hope in Christ. And when we shall gather from the East and the West and the North and the South from every nation and kindred and tongue and people to sit down to eat bread in the Kingdom of Heaven with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and the Master of the Feast comes to view His guests whom He has purchased with His own blood, think you that Abraham Lincoln will not be among them? As star differs from star in glory, so also is the resurrection from the dead. "And I say unto you," counsels our beloved Master, "Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Shall it not be the glory of Abraham Lincoln that he, above almost any other man, has made and continues to make friends in every part of our world, because he dedicated his life to the eternal principle that all men are created free and equal. And let us "highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain."

<sup>14</sup>Six Months in the White House, p. 293.



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The foregoing chapters were published first as a series of articles in *The Covenanter Witness* and are published herewith without much revision. The following index will show that some quotations have been used more than one time in proof of different points, which we hope will be pardoned, as in most cases it will be easier for the reader to read the matter twice than to search for it in a cross reference.

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