

THE RELIGION OF  
ABRAHAM LINCOLN



[Stewart, Judd]

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Compliments

Dear Sir

~~Judd Stewart~~



# THE RELIGION OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

BEING A REPRINT OF THE LECTURE OF  
REV. JAS. A. REED IN 1872, AND THE  
ANSWERING LECTURE OF  
W. H. HERNDON IN 1873



PRIVATELY PRINTED  
1915



*“Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate  
Nor set down aught in malice.”*

When a great man dies his biographers and eulogists usually begin to iron out the wrinkles of ruggedness in his life; his virtues are enlarged upon and his shortcomings minimized until finally the real man is obliterated and in his stead a figure free from the traits of ordinary manhood is presented for the contemplation of future generations. This was true in the case of Washington, and is, to some extent, becoming so in the case of Abraham Lincoln. It is proper, therefore, to treasure up and preserve what is written about him by his associates.

Recently I discovered a lecture delivered in 1873 by Wm. H. Herndon in answer to certain statements made in a lecture by the Rev. J. A. Reed. The Herndon lecture was printed on a single sheet as a broadside, and so far as I am aware has not otherwise been printed. The lecture of the Rev. Mr. Reed

was published in *Scribner's Magazine*, July, 1873.


These two lectures I believe constitute the beginning of the discussion as to what were the religious opinions and beliefs of President Lincoln. Many volumes have appeared in the last few years on this subject but these two statements made within a few years after President Lincoln's death have hitherto not been available to students of his life. They neither add to nor detract from the estimate posterity places upon his character but in the interest of historical completeness are herewith presented for the perusal of those who may be interested. But far better than any statement by any associate or eulogist is the record of the man as set forth in his letters and speeches. No one can read these documents and fail to be convinced that Abraham Lincoln had an abiding faith in God, that he was deeply religious, that he had great charity and gentleness of soul, but there is nothing in this record to justify the claims of those who



would prove him an orthodox Christian—  
“He wore no official robes either on his body  
or his soul; he never pretended to be more  
or less or other or different from what he  
really was.”

Plainfield, 1915.

J. S.



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## THE LATER LIFE AND RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN\*

While the fate and future of the Christian religion in no wise depends upon the sentiments of Abraham Lincoln, yet the life and character of this remarkable man belong to the public, to tell for evil or for good on coming generations; and as the attempt has been made to impute to him the vilest sentiments, even to his dying day, it is fitting and just that the weakness and infidelity charged upon his later life should not go down unchallenged to posterity. The latest biography of Mr. Lincoln, published under the name of Col. W. H. Lamon, but with the large cooperation of Mr. W. H. Herndon, concerns itself with the endeavor to establish certain

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\*The accompanying article was originally prepared by its author (the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, in Springfield, Illinois), as a lecture, and has been repeatedly given in that form to various audiences. At the request of the Editor of *Scribner's Monthly* to whom it seemed that the testimony contained in the lecture was of permanent value, it is here presented with slight alterations, and with no departure from the rhetorical style which was determined by its original purpose.

allegations injurious to the good name of that illustrious man, whose tragic and untimely death has consecrated his memory in the hearts of a grateful nation. Two charges in this biography are worthy of especial notice and disproof,—the charge that he was born a bastard, and the charge that he died an infidel. Mr. Lamon begins his pleasing task by raising dark and unfounded insinuations as to the legitimacy of his hero, and then occupies from twenty-five to thirty pages with evidence to prove that Mr. Lincoln was a confirmed infidel, and died playing a “sharp game on the Christian community:” that, in his “morbid ambition for popularity,” he would say good Lord or good Devil, “adjusting his religious sentiments to his political interests.” In meeting these insinuations and charges I shall necessarily have recourse to political documents and papers, but it shall not be my aim to parade Mr. Lincoln’s political opinions, further than to eliminate from his writings and speeches his religious sentiments.

As to the ungracious insinuation that Mr. Lincoln was not the child of lawful wedlock, I have only to say that it is an insinuation unsupported by a shadow of justifiable evidence. The only thing on which Mr. Lamon bases the insinuation is, that *he* has been unable to find any record of the marriage of Mr. Lincoln's parents. Just as if it would be any evidence against the fact of their marriage, if no record could be found. If every man in this country is to be considered as illegitimate who cannot produce his parents' certificate of marriage, or find a record of it in a family Bible anywhere, there will be a good many very respectable people in the same category with Mr. Lincoln. Such an insinuation might be raised with as much plausibility in the case of multitudes of the early settlers of the country. It is a questionable act of friendship thus to rake "the short and simple annals of the poor," and upon such slender evidence raise an insinuation so unfounded. But I am prepared to show that if Mr. Lamon has found no record of the marriage of Mr. Lincoln's

parents, it is simply because he has not extended his researches as faithfully in this direction as he has in some others. It appears that there is a well-authenticated record of the marriage of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, and, in the same connection, the birth of Abraham Lincoln and Sarah Lincoln. Hearing that the Hon. J. C. Black, of Champaign, Ill., a warm personal friend of Mr. Lincoln, had in his possession several papers, given to him soon after Mr. Lincoln's death by a member of the family, and among them a leaf from the family Bible containing the record of the marriage of Mr. Lincoln's parents, I at once telegraphed to him in relation to this record, and have in my possession the following letter, which will explain itself:

CHAMPAIGN, ILL., Jan. 8th, 1873.

J. A. REED:

DEAR SIR—Your telegram of the 7th reached me this A.M. In reply permit me to say that I was in possession of the leaf of which you speak, and which contained the record of the marriage of Thos. Lin-

coln and Nancy Hanks, the birth of Abraham Lincoln and Sarah Lincoln. The leaf is very old, and is the last page of the Apocrypha. It was given to me, with certificate of genuineness, by Dennis F. Hanks in 1866. I have sent both record and certificate to Wm. P. Black, Att'y at law, 131 Lasalle street, Chicago, Ill., and duly by him delivered to the Illinois Historical Association. Hon. I. N. Arnold called on my brother and obtained the originals for use in a revised edition of his life of Lincoln, and I understand that since then they have passed into the hands of Robt. Lincoln, Esq., where they were when I last heard from them. Hoping that what I have written may be of some use,

I remain very truly yours,

J. C. BLACK.

Presuming that the first of Col. Lamon's libels upon Mr. Lincoln's memory is thus sufficiently disposed of, I proceed to consider the charges against his religious life and character. The best refutation of these charges lies on the pages of the book in which they are advanced. However skeptical Mr. Lincoln may have been in his earlier life, Mr.

Lamon persists in asserting and attempting to prove that he continued a confirmed skeptic to the last: that he was an unbeliever in the truth of the Christian religion, and died an infidel; that, while "he was by no means free from a kind of belief in the supernatural, he rejected the great facts of Christianity as wanting the support of authentic evidence;" that, "during all the time of his residence at Springfield and in Washington, he never let fall from his lips an expression which remotely implied the slightest faith in Jesus Christ, as the Son of God and the Saviour of men;" that "he was at all times an infidel." From twenty-five to thirty pages of evidence is produced in proof of this allegation.

But all this positive statement as to Mr. Lincoln's persistent and final infidelity is contradicted by the admissions of the book itself. It is admitted that there did come a time in Mr. Lincoln's life at Springfield when he began to affiliate with Christian people, and to give his personal presence and support to the church. It is admitted that



he did so plausibly identify himself with the Christian community that "his New Salem associates and the aggressive deists with whom he originally united at Springfield gradually dispersed and fell away from his side." Here is the fact, openly and squarely stated by Mr. Lamon, that Mr. Lincoln, even while at Springfield, did make such a change in his sentiments and bearing toward the Christian community, that "the aggressive deists and infidels with whom he originally united gradually dispersed and fell away from his side." He no sooner turned away from them in sentiment than they turned away from him in fact.

But how does the biographer attempt to explain this? How does he account for this admitted and observable change in Mr. Lincoln's life, that relieved him of the presence of so much aggressive deistical company? Why, by means of an explanation that kills the accusation itself—an explanation that fastens upon Mr. Lincoln the very charge of hypocrisy against which he pro-

fesses to defend him. He accounts for this admitted and observable change in the attitude of Mr. Lincoln towards the Christian community, not by supposing that there was any sincerity about it, but by affirming that he was trying "to play a sharp game on the Christians of Springfield!" It was because "he was a wily politician, and did not disdain to regulate his religious manifestations with reference to his political interests:" and because, "seeing the immense and augmenting power of the churches, he aspired to lead the religious community, foreseeing that in order to [insure] his political success he must not appear an enemy within their gates." And yet, if we are to believe Col. Lamon, he was an enemy all the while at heart; and while attending church, and supporting the Gospel, and making Sabbath-school speeches, and speeches before the Bible Society, he was at heart a disbeliever of the truth and an antagonist of the cause which he professed to be supporting. In other words, he was all these years playing the arrant hypocrite;

deceiving the Christian community and wheedling it for political purposes; playing the role of a gospel hearer in the sanctuary, and a hail-fellow well met with profane fellows of the baser sort in the private sanctum of infidelity or "aggressive deism."

Strangely enough, however, Col. Lamon and his companion in authorship not only praise Mr. Lincoln's greatness, but laud his singular conscientiousness and integrity of motive almost to perfection. Says Mr. Herndon, "He was justly entitled to the appellation, Honest Abe;" "honesty was his pole star; conscience, the faculty that loves the just and the right, was the second great quality and *forte* of Mr. Lincoln's character." "He had a deep, broad, living conscience. His great reason told him what was true and good, right and wrong, just or unjust, and his conscience echoed back the decision, and it was from this point he spoke and wove his character and fame among us. His conscience ruled his heart." (See Herndon's letter in Carpenter's *Life of Lincoln*.)

In confirmation of this, Mr. Lamon goes on to show that Mr. Lincoln scorned everything like hypocrisy or deceit. In fact he makes his hero to be such a paragon of honesty and conscious integrity of motive that he would not undertake to plead a bad cause before a jury if he could possibly shift the responsibility over on to some other lawyer, whose conscience was not quite so tender. He brings in the testimony of a most reputable lawyer of another place in confirmation of this, who states: "That for a man who was for a quarter of a century both a lawyer and a politician, Mr. Lincoln was the most honest man I ever knew. He was not only morally honest but intellectually so. He could not reason falsely; if he attempted it he failed. In politics he never would try to mislead. At the bar, when he thought he was wrong, he was the weakest lawyer I ever saw." "In a closely contested case where Mr. Lincoln had proved an account for a client, who was, though he knew it not, a very slippery fellow, the opposing attorney after-

ward proved a receipt clearly covering the entire case. By the time he was through Mr. Lincoln was missing. The court sent for him to the hotel. 'Tell the Judge,' said Mr. Lincoln, 'that I can't come; my hands are dirty and I came over to clean them.' "

Page after page is thus taken to show Mr. Lincoln's singular conscientiousness and honesty, his incapability of hypocrisy or deceit as a lawyer, a politician and a gentleman. And yet these consistent biographers go back on all this testimony of their own mouths when they come to explain the admitted change in his life, when he began to lean toward the church, and the "aggressive deists" parted company with him. Then they find it convenient to call him a "wily politician," who is "playing a sharp game with the Christians;" "the cautious pretender who does not disdain to regulate his religious manifestations with reference to his political interests." They saddle upon him the vilest hypocrisy and deceit, and make him "act the liar's part," in order to send

him down to posterity an infidel. On one page they reason that Mr. Lincoln could not have made any such admissions of his belief in the Christian religion as have been maintained, as such admissions would be contrary to his well-known character; on the next page they affirm that Mr. Lincoln could not act the hypocrite; and on a third they do not hesitate to attribute to him the very grossest duplicity, in their zeal to fasten on him the charge of permanent skepticism. They go back on their own logic, eat their own argument, and give the lie to the very charge they are laboring with such considerable pains to establish.

The book, therefore, I repeat bears on its own pages the best refutation of the charge it makes against Mr. Lincoln. Surely, such serious inconsistency of statement, such illogical absurdity, even, could hardly have escaped the notice of the biographers if some preconceived opinion had not prejudiced their minds and blinded their eyes. The *animus* of the book and the

purpose for which it was written are only too apparent.

Perhaps it might suffice to rest the refutation of this charge against Mr. Lincoln's religious character on the internal evidence of Col. Lamon's volume, with which I have thus far been occupied. But there is something to be said concerning the authenticity and accuracy of the testimony by which the charge seems to be supported.

I have been amazed to find that the principal persons whose testimony is given in this book to prove that their old friend lived and died an infidel, never wrote a word of it, and never gave it as their opinion or allowed it to be published as covering their estimate of Mr. Lincoln's life and religious views. They were simply familiarly interviewed, and their testimony misrepresented, abridged and distorted to suit the purpose of the interviewer, and the business he had on hand.

The two gentlemen whose names are most relied upon, and who stand first on the list of witnesses to establish the charge these

biographers have made, are the Hon. John T. Stuart, and Col. Jas. H. Matheny, of Springfield, old and intimate friends of Mr. Lincoln.

Hon. John T. Stuart is an ex-member of Congress, and was Mr. Lincoln's first law partner,—a gentleman of the highest standing and ability in his profession, and of unimpeachable integrity. Mr. Lamon has attributed to Mr. Stuart testimony the most disparaging and damaging to Mr. Lincoln's character and opinions,—testimony which Mr. Stuart utterly repudiates, both as to language and sentiment, as the following letter shows:—

SPRINGFIELD, Dec. 17th, 1872.

REV. J. A. REED:

DEAR SIR—My attention has been called to a statement in relation to the religious opinions of Mr. Lincoln, purporting to have been made by me, and published in Lamon's *Life of Lincoln*. The language of that statement is not mine; it was not written by me, and I did not see it until it was in print.

I was once interviewed on the subject of Mr. Lincoln's religious opinions, and doubtless said that Mr.



Lincoln was in the earlier part of his life an infidel. I could not have said that "Dr. Smith tried to convert Lincoln from infidelity so late as 1858, and couldn't do it." In relation to that point, I stated, in the same conversation, some facts which are omitted in that statement, and which I will briefly repeat. That Eddie, a child of Mr. Lincoln, died in 1848 or 1849, and that he and his wife were in deep grief on that account. That Dr. Smith, then Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, at the suggestion of a lady friend of theirs called upon Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln, and that first visit resulted in great intimacy and friendship between them, lasting till the death of Mr. Lincoln, and continuing with Mrs. Lincoln till the death of Dr. Smith. I stated that I had heard, at the time, that Dr. Smith and Mr. Lincoln had much discussion in relation to the truth of the Christian religion, and that Dr. Smith had furnished Mr. Lincoln with books to read on that subject, and among others one which had been written by himself, some time previous, on infidelity; and that Dr. Smith claimed that after this investigation Mr. Lincoln had changed his opinion, and became a believer in the truth of the Christian religion: that Mr. Lincoln

and myself never conversed upon that subject, and I had no personal knowledge as to his alleged change of opinion. I stated, however, that it was certainly true, that up to that time Mr. Lincoln had never regularly attended any place of religious worship, but that after that time he rented a pew in the First Presbyterian Church, and with his family constantly attended the worship in that church until he went to Washington as President. This much I said at the time, and can now add that the Hon. Ninian W. Edwards, the brother-in-law of Mr. Lincoln, has, within a few days, informed me that when Mr. Lincoln commenced attending the First Presbyterian Church he admitted to him that his views had undergone the change claimed by Dr. Smith.

I would further say that Dr. Smith was a man of very great ability, and on theological and metaphysical subjects had few superiors and not many equals.

Truthfulness was a prominent trait in Mr. Lincoln's character, and it would be impossible for any intimate friend of his to believe that he ever aimed to deceive, either by his words or his conduct.

Yours truly,

JOHN T. STUART.

Similar testimony, to the extent of a page or more of finely printed matter, Mr. Lamon attributes to Col. Jas. H. Matheny, of Springfield, Ill., an old acquaintance of Mr. Lincoln, an able lawyer and of high standing in the community. Mr. Matheny testifies that he never wrote a word of what is attributed to him; that it is not a fair representation of either his language or his opinions, and that he never would have allowed such an article to be published as covering his estimate of Mr. Lincoln's life and character. Here is what this gentleman has to say, given over his own signature:

SPRINGFIELD, Dec. 16th, 1872.

REV. J. A. REED:

DEAR SIR—The language attributed to me in Lamon's book is not from my pen. I did not write it, and it does not express my sentiments of Mr. Lincoln's entire life and character. It is a mere collection of sayings gathered from private conversations that were only true of Mr. Lincoln's earlier life. I would not have allowed such an article to be printed over

my signature as covering my opinion of Mr. Lincoln's life and religious sentiments. While I do believe Mr. Lincoln to have been an infidel in his former life, when his mind was as yet unformed, and his associations principally with rough and skeptical men, yet I believe he was a very different man in later life; and that after associating with a different class of men, and investigating the subject, he was a firm believer in the Christian religion.

Yours truly,

JAS. H. MATHENY.

It is unnecessary that I occupy more space with the rest of the testimony, as there is none of it given over the signature of anybody, save that which is given over the signature of W. H. Herndon. All aside from this bears evidence of having been manipulated to suit the purpose for which it is wanted, and is either contradictory, or fails to cover the whole of Mr. Lincoln's life. Judge Davis, for instance, is made to say: "I don't know anything about Lincoln's religion, nor do I think anybody else knows anything

about it." Of what value can the testimony be that is prefaced with such declarations of knowing nothing about the matter?

John J. Nicolay is made to testify, that "to his knowledge Mr. Lincoln did not change his views after he came to Washington;" and yet he states in immediate connection that, "he does not know what his views were, never having heard him explain them."

Jesse W. Fell either testifies, or is made to testify, to Mr. Lincoln's skeptical notions. And yet Mr. Fell admits that it "was eight or ten years previous to his death" that he believed him to be entertaining the views of which he speaks, "and that he *may have changed his sentiments* after his removal from among us." All this would be strange kind of testimony on which to convict Mr. Lincoln of murder in the presence of a judge and jury. But with such evidence it is sought to convict him of infidelity.

We are enabled to see, therefore, in the light of this revelation, of what "trustworthy

materials" this book is composed; how much Mr. Lamon's "names and dates and authorities, by which he strengthens his testimony," are to be depended upon; and what reason unsuspecting or sympathizing critics and journalists have for arriving at the sage conclusion that Mr. Lincoln "was, in his habit of thought, heterodox in the extreme to the close of his life, and a very different man from what he was supposed to be." The evidence of this book, so far as the prominent witnesses are concerned, and so far as it relates to the later years of Mr. Lincoln's life, is not only utterly untrustworthy, but even an ingenious and romantic invention.

Having shown what claims Mr. Lamon's book has to being the "only fair and reliable history" of Mr. Lincoln's life and views, and of what "trustworthy materials" it is composed, I shall now give the testimony I have collected to establish what has ever been the public impression, that Mr. Lincoln was in his later life, and at the time of his death, a firm believer in the truth of the

Christian religion. The infidelity of his earlier life is not so much to be wondered at, when we consider the poverty of his early religious instruction and the peculiar influences by which he was surrounded. Gideon Welles, formerly Secretary of the Navy, in a recent article in the *Galaxy*, in accounting for the late and peculiar manifestation of faith which Mr. Lincoln exhibited, says: "It was doubtless to be attributed in a great measure to the absence of early religious culture—a want of educational advantages in his youthful frontier life." This, together with the fact that his youth and early manhood were spent chiefly among a rough, illiterate and skeptical class of people, is amply confirmed by Mr. Lamon's narrative.

On the same authority it appears that Mr. Lincoln had in his former life read but few books, and that everything he had read, of an intellectual character, bearing on the truth of the Bible, was of an infidel sort. It does not appear that he had ever seen, much less read, a work on the evidences of

Christianity till his interview with Rev. Dr. Smith in 1848. We hear of him as reading Paine, Voltaire and Theodore Parker, but nothing on the other side. The men by whom he was surrounded in his earlier life, it seems, kept him well supplied with their kind of literature. He was familiar with some of the master spirits of infidelity and theism, but had never grappled with the evidences of Christianity as presented by the great defenders of the Christian faith.

But then Mr. Lincoln's mind was of too much greatness and intellectual candor to remain the victim of a false theory in the presence of clear and sufficient intellectual testimony. And he no sooner, in the providence of God, was placed in possession of the truth, and led to investigate for himself, than he stood firmly and avowedly on the side of the Christian religion.

In proof of this statement, I first of all produce the testimony of Rev. Dr. Smith, Mr. Lincoln's pastor at Springfield. In relation to Mr. Lincoln's opinion of Dr. Smith,



it is only necessary for me to state that he stood so high in his esteem, that he gave him the appointment of Consul to Glasgow. Dr. Smith was in Scotland at the time of Mr. Lincoln's death, and soon after this sad event, Mr. Herndon conceived the notion of collecting materials for his intended biography. He accordingly addressed a letter to Dr. Smith in Scotland, with the view of getting some information from so respectable a source to prove that Mr. Lincoln had died an infidel. In this, however, he was mistaken, to his evident chagrin and disappointment. I shall give some extracts from Dr. Smith's printed letter, which is to be found in the *Springfield Journal* of March, 1867, in which he gives his opinion of both Mr. Herndon and Mr. Lincoln.

EAST CAINNO, SCOTLAND, 24th Jan. 1867.

W. H. HERNDON, ESQ.:

SIR—Your letter of the 20th Dec. was duly received. In it you ask me to answer several questions in relation to the illustrious President, Abraham Lin-

coln. 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 preëminently an upright man—ever ready, so far as in his power, to render unto all their dues.

It was my honor to place before Mr. Lincoln arguments designed to prove the divine authority and in-

spiration of the Scriptures, accompanied by the arguments of infidel objectors in their own language. To the arguments on both sides Mr. Lincoln gave a most patient, impartial and searching investigation. To use his own language, he examined the arguments as a lawyer who is anxious to reach the truth investigates testimony. The result was the announcement by himself that the argument in favor of the divine authority and inspiration of the Scriptures was unanswerable. I could say much more on this subject, but as you are the person addressed, for the present I decline. The assassin, Booth, by his diabolical act, unwittingly sent the illustrious martyr to glory, honor and immortality; but his false friend has attempted to send him down to posterity with infamy branded on his forehead, as a man who, notwithstanding all he suffered for his country's good, was destitute of those feelings and affections without which there can be no real excellency of character. Sir, I am with due respect your obedient servant,

JAS. SMITH.

N. B.—It will no doubt be gratifying to the friends of Christianity to learn that very shortly after Mr. Lincoln became a member of my congregation, at my

request, in the presence of a large assembly at the annual meeting of the Bible Society of Springfield, he delivered an address the object of which was to inculcate the importance of having the Bible placed in possession of every family in the State. In the course of it he drew a striking contrast between the Decalogue and the moral codes of the most eminent lawgivers of antiquity, and closed (as near as I can recollect) in the following language: "It seems to me that nothing short of infinite wisdom could by any possibility have devised and given to man this excellent and perfect moral code. It is suited to men in all conditions of life, and includes all the duties they owe to their Creator, to themselves, and to their fellow-men."

J. S.

Mr. Lamon, aware of the importance of Dr. Smith's testimony, attempts to break the force of it by the *argumentum ad nauseam*. He alludes to Dr. Smith as a gentleman of "slender abilities for the conversion of so distinguished a person, and as having in his zeal composed a heavy tract out of his own head to suit the particular case, and that he afterwards *drew* the acknowledgment

from Mr. Lincoln that it was unanswerable," and that he himself is the only man that can testify of such an admission on the part of Mr. Lincoln. This is all the gratuitous assertion of a man who is driven to the wall for evidence to prove his point. Now John T. Stuart has already testified to Dr. Smith's abilities as a theologian and a metaphysician having few superiors. He testifies to the fact that Dr. Smith's work was not written to suit Mr. Lincoln's case. It was written previously, before Dr. Smith ever saw Mr. Lincoln. Nor is it true that Dr. Smith is the only one who can testify to an admission on the part of Mr. Lincoln of a change of sentiments. There are many residents of Springfield, both ladies and gentlemen, who can testify to this admission. I give one or two letters as a sample.

SPRINGFIELD, Dec. 24th, 1872.

REV. JAS. A. REED:

DEAR SIR—A short time after the Rev. Dr. Smith became pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in this city, Mr. Lincoln said to me, "I have been

reading a work of Dr. Smith on the evidences of Christianity, and have heard him preach and converse on the subject, and I am now convinced of the truth of the Christian religion.”

Yours truly,

N. W. EDWARDS.

SPRINGFIELD, Jan. 6th, 1873.

REV. J. A. REED:

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

Yours, &c.,

THOS. LEWIS.

There are many others who can testify that Mr. Lincoln, both publicly and privately

while at Springfield, made the admission of his belief in the truth of the Christian religion. He did it in most unequivocal language, in addresses before the Bible Society and in Sabbath-school.

I next refer to the testimony of Rev. Dr. Gurley, Mr. Lincoln's pastor at Washington city. Even if, before his election to the presidency, Mr. Lincoln had entertained the sentiments attributed to him, after he had reached the pinnacle of political elevation, there was certainly no necessity for him any longer to be "playing a sharp game with the Christians," and destroying his peace of mind by wearing the mask of hypocrisy. He was surely free now to worship where he felt most comfortable. But we no sooner find him in Washington than we find him settling down under the ministry of Dr. Gurley, a sound and orthodox minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Dr. Gurley was his intimate friend, and spiritual counselor and adviser, during the most trying and difficult time of his life. He was with him not only

in the hours of his personal family bereavement, but when his heart was heavy and perplexed with the welfare of his country. Having been associated with Dr. Gurley in the charge of his pulpit for a time previous to his death, and being intimately acquainted with him, I have had the opportunity of knowing what his views of Mr. Lincoln's sentiments were. In the funeral oration which Dr. Gurley delivered in Washington, he says:

“Probably since the days of Washington no man was ever so deeply and firmly embedded and enshrined in the hearts of the people as Abraham Lincoln. Nor was it a mistaken confidence and love. He deserved it—deserved it all. He merited it by his character, by his acts, and by the whole tone and tenor of his life . . . His integrity was thorough, all-pervading, all-controlling and incorruptible. He saw his duty as the Chief Magistrate of a great and imperiled people, and he determined to do his duty, seeking the guidance, and leaning on the arm of Him of



whom it is written: 'He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.'

"Never shall I forget the emphatic and deep emotion with which he said in this very room, to a company of clergymen who called to pay their respects to him in the darkest days of our civil conflict: 'Gentlemen, my hope of success in this struggle rests on that immutable foundation, the justness and the goodness of God; and when events are very threatening I still hope that in some way all will be well in the end, because our cause is just and God will be on our side.' "

This was uttered when Dr. Gurley was not aware, as I suppose, that Mr. Lincoln had ever been charged with entertaining infidel sentiments. While sitting in the study one day with him, conversing on Mr. Lincoln's character, I asked him about the rumor of his infidelity then being circulated by Mr. Herndon. He said, "I do not believe a word of it." It could not have been true of him while here, for I have had frequent and intimate conversa-

tions with him on the subject of the Bible and the Christian religion, when he could have no motive to deceive me, and I considered him sound not only on the truth of the Christian religion but on all its fundamental doctrines and teaching. And more than that: in the latter days of his chastened and weary life, after the death of his son, Willie, and his visit to the battle-field of Gettysburg, he said, with tears in his eyes, that he had lost confidence in everything but God, and that he now believed his heart was changed, and that he loved the Saviour, and if he was not deceived in himself, it was his intention soon to make a profession of religion." Language to this effect Mr. Lincoln it appears, used in conversation with other persons, and I refer next to the corroborating testimony of Noah Brooks, Esq., now associated with the *New York Tribune*. This gentleman has already published most interesting testimony in relation to Mr. Lincoln's religious sentiments in *Harper's Monthly* of July, 1865. In order that his testimony may

be fully appreciated, I will here state, on the authority of a mutual friend, that "Mr. Brooks is himself an earnest Christian man, and had the appointment of private secretary to the President, to which office he would have acceded had Mr. Lincoln lived. He was so intimate with the President that he visited him socially at times when others were refused admission, took tea with the family, spending evenings with him, reading to him, and conversing with him freely on social and religious topics, and in my opinion knows more of the secret inner life and religious views of Mr. Lincoln, at least during the term of his presidency, than any man living." The following is a letter which I have received from Mr. Brooks in relation to his views of Mr. Lincoln's religious sentiments:—

NEW YORK, Dec. 31st, 1872.

REV. J. A. REED:

MY DEAR SIR—In addition to what has appeared from my pen, I will state that I have had many conversations with Mr. Lincoln, which were more or less of a religious character, and while I never tried to

draw anything like a statement of his views from him, yet he freely expressed himself to me as having "a hope of blessed immortality through Jesus Christ." His views seemed to settle so naturally around that statement, that I considered no other necessary. His language seemed not that of an inquirer, but of one who had a prior settled belief in the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion. Once or twice, speaking to me of the change which had come upon him, he said, while he could not fix any definite time, yet it was after he came here, and I am very positive that in his own mind he identified it with about the time of Willie's death. He said, too, that after he went to the White House he kept up the habit of daily prayer. Sometimes he said it was only ten words, but those ten words he had. There is no possible reason to suppose that Mr. Lincoln would ever deceive me as to his religious sentiments. In many conversations with him, I absorbed the firm conviction that Mr. Lincoln was at heart a Christian man, believed in the Saviour, and was seriously considering the step which would formally connect him with the visible Church on earth. Certainly, any suggestion as to Mr. Lincoln's skepticism or infidelity, to me who

knew him intimately from 1862 till the time of his death, is a monstrous fiction—a shocking perversion.

Yours truly,

NOAH BROOKS.

The following extract I add also from Mr. Brooks's article in *Harper's Monthly* of July, 1865: "There was something touching in his child-like and simple reliance on Divine aid, especially when in such extremities as he sometimes fell into; then, though prayer and reading the Scriptures was his constant habit, he more earnestly than ever sought that strength which is promised when mortal help faileth. He said once, 'I have been many times driven to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for that day.' At another time he said, 'I am very sure that if I do not go away from here a wiser man, I shall go away a better man for having learned here what a very poor sort of a man I am.'"

Mr. Carpenter, author of *Six Months in the White House*, whose intimacy with Mr.

Lincoln gives importance to his testimony, says that "he believed Mr. Lincoln to be a sincere Christian," and among other proofs of it gives another well-authenticated admission (made by Mr. Lincoln to an estimable lady of Brooklyn, laboring in the Christian Commission) of a change of heart, and of his intention at some suitable opportunity to make a profession of religion.

Mr. Newton Bateman, Superintendent of Public Instruction in the State of Illinois, a gentleman of rare literary attainments, and of unquestionable veracity, has given very important testimony in relation to one particular point, more especially, Mr. Lincoln's belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ. Both Mr. Herndon and Mr. Lamon persist in asserting that Mr. Lincoln never used the name of Jesus Christ except to deny his divinity, and that Mr. Bateman is "the sole and only man who dare say that Mr. Lincoln believed Jesus Christ to be the Son of God."

Mr. Bateman testifies that in 1860, Mr. Lincoln in conversation with him used the

following language: "I know that there is a God, and that He hates injustice and slavery. I see the storm coming, and I know that His hand is in it. If He has a place and a work for me, and I think He has, I believe I am ready. I am nothing, but truth is everything. I know I am right, because I know that liberty is right, for Christ teaches it and Christ is God. I have told them a house divided against itself cannot stand; and Christ and reason say the same, and they will find it so," &c. This testimony was originally given in Holland's *Life of Lincoln*. Mr. Herndon, at first unwilling to impeach Mr. Bateman's veracity, suggests a doubt "whether he is correctly reported in Holland's history;" presently, however, summoning courage, he ventures the affirmation: "On my word the world may take it for granted that Holland is wrong; that he does not state Mr. Lincoln's views correctly." He then goes on to say that "between himself and Dr. Holland, Mr. Bateman is not in a very pleasant situation." We have seen, however, that Mr. Herndon's

“word,” in a matter where his prejudices are so violent and his convictions so obstinate, is hardly a sufficient denial with which to oppose the deliberate and unretracted statement of an intelligent and reputable witness. And Mr. Bateman has no need to be disturbed, so long as the “unpleasantness” of his situation is occasioned by no more serious discomfort than Mr. Herndon’s unsupported contradiction. As the matter now stands, Mr. Herndon offers a denial, based on general impressions as to Mr. Lincoln’s character, against the direct, specific, and detailed testimony of a careful and competent man as to what he heard with his own ears. Mr. Herndon simply did not hear what Mr. Bateman did hear; and is in the position of that Irishman on trial for his life, who, when one witness swore directly that he saw the accused commit the crime, proposed to put upon the stand a dozen witnesses who could swear they did *not* see him.

Mr. Lamon also states that Mr. Bateman is a respectable citizen, whose general repu-



tation for truth and veracity is not to be impeached, but his story, as reported in Holland's *Life of Lincoln*, is so inconsistent with Mr. Lincoln's whole character that it must be rejected as altogether incredible. Unfortunately, however, for Mr. Lamon, he has not so impressed us with the trustworthy nature of the materials of his own book, as that we can afford to distrust the honesty and integrity of either Dr. Holland or Mr. Bateman for his sake. If anybody's story of Mr. Lincoln's life and sentiments is to be "rejected as inconsistent and altogether incredible," the testimony thus far would seem to indicate that it is Mr. Lamon's story. At least that is the "unpleasant situation" in which we shall leave the matter, so far as Mr. Bateman and Dr. Holland are concerned in it.

But Mr. Bateman is not the only one who can testify that Mr. Lincoln did use the name of the Saviour, and believed him to be the Christ of God. I have given several instances already in which he used the name

of Christ as his Saviour, and avowed that he loved him. Moreover, he could not have avowed his belief in the truth of the Christian religion, as many witnesses testify, if he did not believe Jesus to be the Christ of God.

To the various testimony which we have thus far cited it only remains for me to add the testimony of his own lips. In his address to the colored people of Baltimore, on the occasion of the presentation of a copy of the Bible, Mr. Lincoln said: "In regard to this great Book, I have only to say, it is the best gift which God has ever given to man. All the good from the Saviour of the world is communicated to us through this Book."

To the Hon. H. C. Deming, of Conn., he said that "the article of his faith was contained in the Saviour's condensed statement of both law and gospel—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself.' "

Mr. Herndon affirms that Mr. Lincoln did not believe in the "Christian dogma of the forgiveness of sin:" he believed that "God would not and could not forgive sin. He did not believe in forgiveness through Christ, nor in fact in any doctrine of forgiveness. In reading Mr. Lincoln's proclamations, however, we find that he does very distinctly recognize the doctrine of the forgiveness of sin on the part of God, and very earnestly implores the people to seek the forgiveness of their sins. In his proclamation of a fast-day, August, 1861, are these words:

"And, *whereas*, it is fit and becoming in all people, at all times, to acknowledge and revere the supreme government of God; to bow in humble submission to his chastisements; to confess and deplore their sins and transgressions, in the full conviction that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to pray with all fervency, and contrition for the *pardon* of their past offenses, and for a blessing on their present and prospective action," etc.

Read also his proclamation enforcing the observance of the Christian Sabbath in the Army and Navy, and ask yourself, Could an infidel have done this?

The President, Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, desires and enjoins the orderly observance of the Sabbath by the officers and men in the military and naval service. The importance for man and beast of the prescribed weekly rest, the sacred rights of Christian soldiers and sailors, a becoming deference to the best sentiment of a Christian people, and a due regard for the Divine will, demand that Sunday labor in the Army and Navy be reduced to the measure of a strict necessity. The discipline and character of the National forces should not suffer, nor the cause they defend be imperiled, by the profanation of the day and the name of the Most High. At this time of public distress, adopting the words of Washington in 1776, "Men may find enough to do in the service of God and their country without abandoning themselves to vice and immorality." The first general order issued by the Father of his Country, after the Declaration of Independence, indicates the spirit in which our institutions were founded and should ever be

defended: "The General hopes and trusts that every officer and man will endeavor to live and act as becomes a Christian soldier defending the dearest rights and liberties of his country."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Besides all this, we find Mr. Lincoln often using the very language of the Saviour, as not only expressing but giving the sanction of Divine authority to his own views and opinions. What a remarkable instance of it in the solemn words that fell from his lips in his last inaugural, as he stood on the steps of the Capitol! Standing upon the verge of his grave, as he was that day, and addressing his last official words to his countrymen, his lips touched as with the finger of inspiration, he said:

"The Almighty has His own purposes. 'Woe unto the world because of offenses, for it must needs be that offenses will come; but woe unto the man by whom the offense cometh.' If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of these offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but

which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern any departure therein from those Divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that the mighty scourge of war may pass away. Yet, if God will that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid with another drawn by the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so must it still be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

Thus it appears, that whether Mr. Lincoln was ever accustomed to blaspheme the name of Jesus Christ or not, or whether he was ever accustomed to deny His divinity or not, as his defamers allege, he is willing, in the last eventful days of his life, standing at the

nation's Capitol, in the hearing of the swelling multitude that hangs upon his lips, to use the language of that Saviour to adorn and give the sanction of Divine authority to one of the most remarkable sentences of his official address.

Hon. Isaac N. Arnold, of Chicago, an intimate acquaintance of Mr. Lincoln, and who is engaged in a review of his work on Mr. Lincoln's life, writes me that "from the time he left Springfield, with the touching request for the prayers of his friends and neighbors, to the day of his death, his words were the words of a Christian, revering the Bible, and obeying its precepts. A spirit of reverence and deep religious feeling pervades nearly all the public utterances and state papers of his later life."

The following interesting testimony from Rev. Dr. Byron Sunderland, of the First Presbyterian Church of Washington City, give us a little insight into the philosophy of Mr. Lincoln's mind and religious sentiments:

WASHINGTON CITY, Nov. 15th, 1872.

REV. JAS. A. REED:

DEAR BRO.—It was in the last days of 1862, about the time Mr. Lincoln was seriously contemplating the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation, that I, in company with some friends of the President, called upon him. After some conversation, in which he seemed disposed to have his joke and fun, he settled down to a serious consideration of the subject before his mind, and for one-half hour poured forth a volume of the deepest Christian philosophy I ever heard. He began by saying—

“The ways of God are mysterious and profound beyond all comprehension—‘who by searching can find Him out?’ Now, judging after the manner of men, taking counsel of our sympathies and feelings, if it had been left to us to determine it, we would have had no war. And going further back to the occasion of it, we would have had no slavery. And tracing it still further back, we would have had no evil. There is the mystery of the universe which no man can solve, and it is at that point that the human understanding utterly backs down. And then there is nothing left but for the heart of man to take up faith and believe and



trust where it cannot reason. Now, I believe we are all agents and instruments of Divine providence. On both sides we are working out the will of God; yet how strange the spectacle! Here is one half the nation prostrated in prayer that God will help them to destroy the Union and build up a government upon the cornerstone of human bondage. And here is the other half equally earnest in their prayers and efforts to defeat a purpose which they regard as so repugnant to their ideas of human nature and the rights of society, as well as liberty and independence. They want slavery; we want freedom. They want a servile class; we want to make equality practical as far as possible. And they are Christians, and we are Christians. They and we are praying and fighting for results exactly the opposite. What must God think of such a posture of affairs? There is but one solution—self-deception. Somewhere there is a fearful heresy in our religion, and I cannot think it lies in the love of liberty and in the inspirations of the human soul.

“What I am to do in the present emergency time will determine. I hold myself in my present position and with the authority vested in me as an instrument of Providence. I have my own views and purposes.

I have my convictions of duty, and my notions of what is right to be done. But I am conscious every moment that all I am and all I have is subject to the control of a Higher Power, and that Power can use me or not use me in any manner, and at any time, as in His wisdom and might may be pleasing to Him.

“Nevertheless, I am no fatalist. I believe in the supremacy of the human conscience, and that men are responsible beings; that God has a right to hold them, and will hold them, to a strict personal account for the deeds done in the body. But, sirs, I do not mean to give you a lecture upon the doctrines of the Christian religion. These are simply with me the convictions and realities of great and vital truths, the power and demonstration of which I see now in the light of this our national struggle as I have never seen before. God only knows the issue of this business. He has destroyed nations from the map of history for their sins. Nevertheless my hopes prevail generally above my fears for our own Republic. The times are dark, the spirits of ruin are abroad in all their power, and the mercy of God alone can save us.”

So did the President discourse until we felt we were imposing on his time, and rising we took our

leave of him, confident that he would be true to those convictions of right and duty which were derived from so deep a Christian philosophy.

Yours truly                      BYRON SUNDERLAND.

The Rev. Dr. Miner, Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Springfield, who was intimately acquainted with Mr. Lincoln, and visited him and his family in Washington previous to his death, has left most interesting testimony in reference to Mr. Lincoln's religious sentiments, confirmatory of what has been given, and which is preserved in the archives of the University of Chicago. Dr. Miner sums up his impressions of Mr. Lincoln as follows: "All that was said during that memorable afternoon I spent alone with that great and good man is engraven too deeply on my memory ever to be effaced. I felt certain of this fact, that if Mr. Lincoln was not really an experimental Christian, he was acting like one. He was doing his duty manfully, and looking to God for help in time of need; and, like the immortal Washington, he believed in the efficacy of prayer, and

it was his custom to read the Scriptures and pray himself." And here I would relate an incident which occurred on the 4th of March, 1861, as told me by Mrs. Lincoln. Said she: "Mr. Lincoln wrote the conclusion of his inaugural address the morning it was delivered. The family being present he read it to them. He then said he wished to be left alone for a short time. The family retired to an adjoining room, but not so far distant but that the voice of prayer could be distinctly heard. There, closeted with God alone, surrounded by the enemies who were ready to take his life, he commended his country's cause and all dear to him to God's providential care, and with a mind calmed with communion with his Father in heaven, and courage equal to the danger, he came forth from that retirement ready for duty."

With such testimony, gathered from gentlemen of the highest standing, and much more that I could add to confirm it, I leave the later life and religious sentiments of Abra-

ham Lincoln to the dispassionate and charitable judgment of a grateful people. While it is to be regretted that Mr. Lincoln was not spared to indicate his religious sentiments by a profession of his faith in accordance with the institutions of the Christian religion, yet it is very clear that he had this step in view, and was seriously contemplating it, as a sense of its fitness and an apprehension of his duty grew upon him. He did not ignore a relation to the Christian church as an obsolete duty and an unimportant matter. How often do we hear him thanking God for the churches! And he was fast bringing his life into conformity to the Christian standard. The coarse story-telling of his early days was less indulged in in his later life. Hon. Isaac N. Arnold, and Mr. Carpenter, as well as Mr. Lincoln's physician at Washington, Dr. Stone, all testify that "while his stories and anecdotes, were racy, witty and pointed beyond all comparison," yet they "never heard one of a character needing palliation or excuse." His physician, Dr. Stone, testifies

that "Mr. Lincoln was the purest-hearted man he ever came in contact with."

His disposition to attend the theater in later life (if to any one it seems to need apology) was not so much a fondness for the play-house as a relief from his mental anxiety, and an escape from the incessant pressure of visitors at the White House. "It is a well-known fact," says Dr. Miner, "that he would not have been at the theater on that fatal night, but to escape the multitude who were that evening pressing into the White House to shake hands with him. It has been said that Mrs. Lincoln urged her husband to go to the theater against his will. This is not true. On the contrary, she tried to persuade him not to go, but he insisted. He said, 'I must have a little rest. A large and overjoyed, excited people will visit me tonight. My arms are lame by shaking hands with the multitude, and the people will pull me to pieces.' He went to the theater, not because he was interested in the play, but because he was care-worn and needed quiet

and repose. Mrs. Lincoln informed me that he seemed to take no notice of what was going on in the theater from the time he entered it till the discharge of the fatal pistol. She said that the last day he lived was the happiest of his life. The very last moments of his conscious life were spent in conversation with her about his future plans, and what he wanted to do when his term of office expired. He said he wanted to visit the Holy Land and see the places hallowed by the footprints of the Saviour. He was saying there was no city he so much desired to see as *Jerusalem*; and with that word half spoken on his tongue, the bullet of the assassin entered his brain, and the soul of the great and good President was carried by angels to the New Jerusalem above."

## LINCOLN'S RELIGION

By W. H. HERNDON.

It is with no little misgivings that I appear before you to-night in this hall of justice to deliver you a lecture on Mr. Lincoln's "Later Life and Religious Sentiments," in answer to a lecture delivered here by the Rev. James A. Reed, of this city, some time since. I shall not weary you with the length of the lecture, and I hope not to tire you with figures and facts. I ask your kind indulgence while I speak to your reason to establish the truth of this controversy between those who hold that Mr. Lincoln was an unbeliever and those who hold he died a Christian. If I fail to establish my point, it will be because of the manner and method of presenting the facts. I shall review the evidences of Mr. Reed, and introduce some new proofs—not, by any means exhaustive of the subject. I think I could state facts about Mr. Lincoln's jokes on and gibes at Christianity and com-



mittees of ministers, who waited on him while President of the United States, and before, that would shock a Christian people.

There are two classes or kinds of minds in the world. One of these classes is credulous, trustful and reverend, blooming into hero worship—never thinking, ever admiring. The other class is thoughtful, doubting, hesitating, forever investigating—blooming and fruiting into truth worship. The hero worshipping class exalts a fool, a knave or a villain into a hero. The truth worshipping class exalts a man only after thorough and searching investigation, and tears down the fool, the knave or villain speedily, without regret. The first class writes romantic biographies. The second class writes the truth. Holland's *Life of Lincoln* is fictitious, romantic, false. The second class states facts, truths, realities. Lamon's *Life of Lincoln*, so far as it goes, is an example of the second class. The hero worshipping class has furnished more than its quota or share of biographical literature. Mr. Lincoln saw and felt this.

I once loaned him a biography of one of the worthies of the world, and on returning it, to me he said; "Why don't they have general blank biographies in all the book stores of the United States to suit purchasers, so that when a man dies, all that his heirs, friends or admirers will have to do will be to fill up the blanks—so much alike do all these biographies read to me." The question is—shall Mr. Lincoln's expression—suggestion—be carried into execution? have general blank lives to sell in all the book stores in the Union to suit purchasers, or shall we go contrary, erect a new and genuine standard of biographical literature, and have honest, truthful and permanent biographical facts? For one, I am determined to state the facts of Mr. Lincoln's life, so far as I know them, including his religious ideas and views. Holland, when he wrote *Lincoln's life*, thought he would forestall all thought, research, and investigation—thought he would hush up and smother out all expression from all sources as to Mr. Lincoln's religion. "O,

never mind, I'll fix that" did not do him any good. He failed; for resolute men were determined to have the truth out—fully, clearly, unmistakably.

These thoughts have been suggested, if not caused, by reading Holland's *Life of Lincoln*, Lamon's *Life of Lincoln*. Holland's review of the same in *Scribner's Monthly* for August 1872, and a lecture by the Rev. James A. Reed of the city of Springfield, Illinois—"defender of the faith" of Lincoln, as he was loudly and clamorously hailed by tongue and press on reaching St. Paul during his recent Christian pleasure trip to Minnesota. I shall not now and here mention Holland—his biography—except to say, that when he and Mr. Reed assert that I am one of the authors of Lamon's *Life of Lincoln*, they and each of them state a falsehood—knowingly and wilfully, I believe. I am not one of the authors of Lamon's *Life of Lincoln*. I never wrote a chapter, a paragraph, a sentence or a word for the biography. Lamon quotes me as authority,

and that is all I am responsible for. I shall not notice Lamon, his biography, or Holland's review of the same. I shall turn my attention to the most Reverend James A. Reed, "defender of the faith" of Honest Abe. His lecture will be found in *Scribner's Monthly* for July, 1873. When a man enters the field of criticism, with iron pen in hand, moved by no admixture of heart, he should be complete master of the subject he proposes to tear down. Anything short of this is folly, if not a fraud on the reading world. To assert what one does not know to be true is a fraud, and is so held in morals as well as in law. The reverend gentleman has entered the field of criticism. He, on short acquaintance with the facts and in the absence of the records, boldly comes forward as "the defender of the Christian faith of Lincoln." It would have been well for him to have studied the facts more thoroughly.

I started out in the Abbott letter, in 1870, with the proposition that Mr. Lincoln was simply a Theist—an unbeliever in Chris-

tianity. I am met by the Christian ministers and pulpit of the land with the assertion that Mr. Lincoln had "religious sentiments"—"many Christian sentiments."

Mr. Reed's lecture is headed carefully, cautiously thus: "The Later Life and Religious Sentiments of Abraham Lincoln." I have never said that Mr. Lincoln had no religious sentiments—no Christian sentiments. On the contrary, I admitted then and do now, that Mr. Lincoln had religious opinion, ideas and sentiments, but the declaration that Mr. Lincoln had religious sentiments does not meet the proposition that Mr. Lincoln died a Theist—an infidel, especially in the orthodox sense of the term. Much "believing" "much hearsay," "many convictions," "many changes of heart," much twaddle is adduced to show that Mr. Lincoln was a Christian. Proclamations of Mr. Lincoln, while President of the United States, are quoted to show that he was a Christian. Mr. Lincoln was the President of a Christian people, and he but used their ideas, language,

speech and forms. So would Tom Paine have done had he been President of this free people. I met with the assertion that if Mr. Lincoln had lived he would have become an evangelical Christian. No one knows this; it is mere speculation, mere guessing. Again, I am met with the assertion that Mr. Lincoln's addresses at Bible and Sunday school societies were eminently Christian. When a man is invited to address such societies, it is implied, unless the man reserves the right to say what he pleases, that he confine himself to their ideas, notions, feelings and philosophy. To do otherwise would be an insult and an outrage on the society. No doubt Mr. Lincoln used polite, courteous general language on such occasions, from which Christian inferences might be drawn. Lincoln was very politic, and a very shrewd man in some particulars. When he was talking to a Christian, he adapted himself to the Christian. When he spoke to, or joked to one of his own kind, he was indecently vulgar. Hence the different opinions about

Mr. Lincoln's Christianity and vulgarity. Mr. Lincoln was chaste in his ideas and language when it was necessary, and when not so he was vulgar in his jokes and stories; he was at moments, as it were, a Christian, through politeness, courtesy, or good breeding toward the delicate, tender, nerved man, the Christian, and in two minutes after, in the absence of such men, and among his own kind, the same old unbeliever. I have witnessed this it may be a thousand times. This conduct of Mr. Lincoln was not hypocritical, but sprang from a high and tender regard for the feelings of men.

How few people there are in the world who fully understand the broad distinction between Religion and Christianity. *Religion* is the universal worshipping element in the whole race of man; it belongs to the whole race of man; it is the general, the universal attribute of man. *Christianity* is but a special form of the universal worship; it is local, Jewish, and not the human universal. It is not as broad, nor as deep, nor as mountain

high as religion. Sift the errors out of the New Testament as well as the Old—eliminate what is local and Jewish therein—and you have the universal, the eternal religion. What is left—religion—is older than Moses, older than the Egyptian and Indian empires; as old as the race of man.

When men speak of Lincoln's religious sentiments they call them his Christian sentiments, and confound one with the other. I have often and often said that Mr. Lincoln was, by nature, a deeply religious man, and I now repeat it. I have often said he was not a Christian, and I now repeat it. He was not an unbeliever in *Religion*, but was as to *Christianity*. Mr. Lincoln was a Theist, as I said in my Abbott letter. A theist does not necessarily deny Revelation. The universal reason—the reason of the whole race of man—is the highest tribunal, the grandest tribunal, this side the Throne. It is the only tribunal that has truth and religion. The universal reason is the test of truth, and the only true guide for the con-



duct of men. I may err—do often err. So may the Rev. James Reed; so may the Jewish people; but the whole race of men never err. Hence religion is universal and infallible. Christianity in its local and Jewish phases, may err, and is fallible. Keeping the issues between Mr. Reed and myself in the mind, and holding on to the difference between religion and Christianity, will help us to understand and fully comprehend the truth.

It is a curious and a wonderful fact that when any man, by his genius, good luck, or otherwise, rises to public notice and to fame, it does not make much difference what life he has led, that the whole Christian world claim him as a pattern Christian, to be forever held up to view as a hero and a saint during all the coming ages, just as if religion would die out of the soul of man unless the great dead be canonized as a model Christian. This is a species of hero or saint-worship. Lincoln they are determined to enthrone among the saints, to be forever worshipped as such. We shall see what we shall see.

The most credulous and truthful minister (Mr. Jas. Reed), divided his lecture into two heads—first, the one in reference to Mr. Lincoln's legitimacy, and the second in reference to his religion. I have never discussed the question of Mr. Lincoln's legitimacy in writing, publicly or otherwise, and it is probable I never shall. I do not think it becomes me to do so, whatever may be my opinion. I feel this, and I shall obey my feeling. I should not even have said what I intend to say, but for Mr. Reed's lecture. Those who are interested in the question are referred to an elaborate and able article published in the *New York World* some time in August, 1873, and subsequently published in the *Chicago Tribune*, as I am informed. This last article was drawn forth by Mr. Reed's lecture from "C. F. B." These facts would have slumbered probably forever, had not Mr. Reed forced them out. I can discuss one thing, however, and it is this: The reverend defender boldly and positively asserts that there is "well authenticated

evidence" of the marriage of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, and that it is now to be found in the hands of Robert Lincoln; that the said record evidences, historically marched thus: 1st, Dennis Hanks had it. 2d, Hanks gave it to J. C. Black. 3d, It was sent by J. C. Black, of Champaign, to Wm. P. Black, attorney at law, 131 Lasalle Street, Chicago, and duly delivered by him to the Historical Association of Chicago, and that it thence passed into the hands of Robert Lincoln, son of Abraham Lincoln. I state, on my best belief, that there is no such well authenticated record showing the marriage of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, now, or ever was, in the hands of any of those gentlemen. I saw a leaf of the Thomas Lincoln Bible, which Dennis Hanks tore out. The writing of the marriages, births and deaths was in the handwriting of Abraham Lincoln, or mostly so, as I now remember. The record was badly worn, broken up into squares of about two inches, having been doubled up and worn

out thus in the pockets of someone. I had great trouble in taking a copy. I borrowed the record of Dennis Hanks, or Mr. Chapman, his son-in-law, and while in my possession I took a copy, and, I verily believe, a correct one. That record wholly fails to state or to record the marriage of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks. While looking over it and copying it, I was struck with astonishment at the omission to record the marriage of Thomas and Nancy, when I saw that most of the record, if not the whole of it, was in the hand-writing of Abraham Lincoln, who would have recorded the marriage if true. I then thought that this omission was one link in the chain of evidence in favor of those who thought and argued that Mr. Lincoln was illegitimate—the Child of Abraham Enloe.

Can the reverend gentleman and myself be talking about two records—different and distinct ones? There is a way of finding out the truth, thus: 1st, The record was torn from a Bible. 2d, The record is in the hand-

writing of Mr. Lincoln, or mostly so. 3d, It commences or opens, as follows: "Nancy Lincoln was born February 10th, 1807," and concludes thus: "Nancy or Sarah Lincoln, daughter of Thomas Lincoln was married to Aaron Grigsby, August 1826." I took a copy of this Bible sheet, this "well authenticated record," Sept. 9th, 1865, and now have it in my hands. I suppose these records are one and the same—identical; and if so, I aver that the reverend gentleman misrepresents the record, falsified it, for it wholly, I believe, fails to state that Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks were ever married. Let anyone compare the opening and conclusion as above given, and he will find the record one and the same. I ask the lecturer to go to Chicago and get a copy of the Bible leaf spoken of, and publish his investigations to the world. What is more astonishing, is that the said "well authenticated record" does *not* fail to state the marriage of Thomas Lincoln and *Sarah Bush*, Thomas Lincoln's *second* wife. Why not record the first mar-

riage? Mr. Lincoln in that record says: "Abraham Lincoln, son of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Lincoln, was born Feb. 12th, 1809. Again he says: "Nancy Lincoln, wife of Thomas Lincoln." How a wife? But the record wholly fails to record or to state the marriage of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks—by whom, how, when or where—if it ever took place. Was it by "jumping the broomstick?" Was it by mutual consent, and agreement between the two, somewhat after the fashion of the free-lovers, without form or ceremony? The gentleman boldly asserted that there was well authenticated evidence of the marriage of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks. I aver that there is no such record. I aver, on my belief, that the gentleman mis-states the record. He affirms that which he does not know to exist, and to that extent, acts fraudulently—proclaims a lie, to use his most Christian language. I wish it distinctly understood that I give no opinion of Mr. Lincoln's legitimacy, or of the marriage of Thomas and Nancy.

The second head of Mr. Reed's lecture is in reference to Mr. Lincoln's religion, and he knows just about as much of his religion, as of his birth and legitimacy—of the marriage of Thomas and Nancy. I affirm that Mr. Lincoln died an unbeliever—was not an evangelical Christian. The lecturer affirms that Mr. Lincoln was a believer in the Christian religion; was, as it were, an orthodox Christian. One side of this question can be proved. It is admitted on all hands that Mr. Lincoln once was an infidel—that he wrote a small book, or essay, or pamphlet against Christianity, and that he continued an unbeliever till late in life. It is a rule of law, as well as a rule of common sense, that when a certain state or condition of affairs is once proved to exist, the presumption is, that it is still continued till the contrary is proved. This rule has full force and virtue till the presumption is removed by evidence. The burden of proof, that Mr. Lincoln died a Christian—even a believer, rests on Mr. Reed, for it is admitted that

late in life and before, Mr. Lincoln was an infidel.

In our review of Mr. Reed's evidences let us proceed in order of the lecturer: 1st, He gets the Hon. Jno. T. Stuart to state in a letter, addressed to himself, dated the 17th December, 1872, that he did not write the note in Lamon's life of Lincoln, at page 488. Mr. Stuart did not write the note, and no one ever said he did. What is there stated was the substance of a conversation between Mr. Stuart and myself about Mr. Lincoln's religion. I took down, in a note, in his office, and in his presence his words and ideas and what he said substantially, as I did in all other cases. The conversation spoken of took place in Mr. Stuart's office and in the east room. Mr. Stuart does not deny that the note is substantially correct as to Mr. Lincoln's earlier belief. He simply says he could not have said that Dr. Smith tried to convert Mr. Lincoln, and *couldn't do it*. I well remember that he did use this language in substance. It seemed to do him good to



say it, and I was glad to hear it. I think the letter which he writes to Mr. Reed proves that he has forgotten. There is an implied admission—nay, an express one, in Mr. Stuart's letter that he never heard of Mr. Lincoln's conversion till Mr. Edwards on the 17th day of December 1872, or a few days before, informed him of the fact. Mr. Stuart expressly says: "I had no personal knowledge as to his (Lincoln's) alleged change of opinion." My notes of Mr. Stuart's conversation with me were taken down in 1866 or '67. Here are five years or more from the time when he made his statement to me, and writing to Mr. Reed his letter in December, 1872, or till he was informed by Mr. Edwards of Mr. Lincoln's change of opinion, to the extent claimed by Dr. Smith. But more hereafter about Dr. Smith, and the extent of Mr. Lincoln's conversion to Christianity. It is quite probable that Mr. Stuart told me much about "Eddie" and Dr. Smith. What he said, which was mere hearsay, may have caused me to go to headquarters—

Dr. Smith. It seems that Mr. Stuart had *heard* that Mr. Lincoln and Dr. Smith did have much discussion about Christianity, but he failed to hear of Mr. Lincoln's conversion or anything like it, and well he might say, *as he did*, that Dr. Smith tried to convert Mr. Lincoln "*but couldn't do it.*" How easy, after five long years, for Mr. Stuart to forget. I say the facts, and Mr. Stuart's own letter to Mr. Reed bear me out in what I say. If Mr. Stuart did not, in substance, say what I make him say, then I committed a great wrong on Mr. Stuart and the reading world, but I affirm that Mr. Stuart did say to me what I make him say, in substance and in fact. I stand by my notes taken at the time. Mr. Stuart makes no other corrections, and impliedly admits that I reported him correctly in the note, except as stated above, and I now state he is reported correctly in the note substantially in every particular. I did not take down his hearsay, as I rejected every other person's hearsay. Truths and facts were what I was after—not hearsay.

The next gentleman introduced by Mr. Reed is Col. James H. Matheny. He is made to say, in a letter addressed to Mr. Reed, that he did not write the note in Lamon's life of Lincoln at pages 487 and 488. I do not at present claim that he did. I wrote it in the Court House—this hall—in Mr. Matheny's presence and at his dictation—read it over to him and he approved it substantially; wrote the note all at once as he spoke it to me; it is not made up of scraps—"a mere collection of sayings gathered from private conversations," *that were true* of Mr. Lincoln's earlier life. I say that this note was written all at one time and place, and not at different times and places. Let any critic, any man of common sense, any man of judgment, read it and he will say: "This was all written at once." I appeal to the note and the manner—the close connection of words, ideas and language in which it runs—word with word, and sentence for sentence and idea for idea, for the proof that the note was made at one sitting. Mr.

Matheny has often told me that Mr. Lincoln was an infidel; he admits this in his letter to Mr. Reed. Mr. Matheny denies nothing in this note—admits its correctness. He never intimated in that or any other conversation with me that he *believed* that Mr. Lincoln in his later life became a Christian. What does Mr. Matheny say in his letter to Mr. Reed to show that Mr. Lincoln in his later life became a Christian? He says: “I *believe* he was a very different man in his later life, and (after) investigating the subject he was a firm believer in the Christian religion.” Notice carefully the words of Col. Matheny. He simply says he “*believes*”; he does not say he *knows*. Col. Matheny says that he believes that Mr. Lincoln—late in life—became and was a firm believer in the Christian religion. I believe that Mr. Lincoln did not late in life become a firm believer in the Christian religion. What! Mr. Lincoln discard his logical faculties and reason with the heart? What! Mr. Lincoln believe that Jesus was the Christ

of God, the truly and only begotten son of Him—as the Christian creed contends? What! Mr. Lincoln believe that the New Testament was and is of special divine authority, and fully and infallibly inspired, as the Christian world contends? What! Mr. Lincoln abandon his life-long ideas of universal, eternal and absolute laws, and contend that the New Testament is any more inspired than Homer's songs, than Milton's Paradise Lost, than Shakespeare, than his own eloquent and inspired oration at Gettysburg! What, in short, Mr. Lincoln believe that the great Creator had connection through the form or instrumentality of a shadow with a Jewish girl? Blasphemy! These things must be believed and acknowledged in order to be a Christian. Does Mr. Matheny know this or does he simply mean that Mr. Lincoln became later in life more *religious* than in his younger days? As Mr. Reed says: "Moreover, he (Lincoln) could not have avowed his belief in the truth of Christianity" \* \* \* if he did not believe Jesus to be the Christ of God.

If Lincoln did not believe that, he was no Christian, and he did not believe it. No man can truthfully say he did. Not even Bateman can say that, as we shall see further on.

Mr. Lamon in his life of Lincoln says this: "Col. Matheny alleges that from 1854 to 1860, Mr. Lincoln played a sharp game upon the Christians of Springfield, 'treading on their toes,' and saying, 'Come and convert me.'" Mr. Matheny said this to me, and had repeated the same in substance, often. How can he reconcile his Reed letter with the expression as above quoted? In the letter he says that late in life he believes that Mr. Lincoln became a firm believer in Christianity. In his expression as above quoted, he says that Mr. Lincoln played a sharp game on the Christians from 1854 to 1860. These things appear to be irreconcilable. Was not this conduct of Mr. Lincoln late in life? Is this an evidence of Mr. Lincoln's Christianity? To play a sharp game on the Christians is not much evidence of Christianity.

But I can make Mr. Matheny consistent with facts, with truth, and with himself, with all that is said in this lecture, if he will only permit me, and I shall attempt it, consent or no consent. I shall take the responsibility.

I have, heretofore, been arguing the question in this part of the lecture as if Col. Matheny's letter to Mr. Reed expressed his ideas and views of Mr. Lincoln. But, fortunately, it does not; he did not write it; it was prepared for him by Mr. Reed, and Matheny is old enough to have known that deception and wrong, if nothing else, was intended. Mr. Matheny and myself had a conversation on the 9th day of December, 1873—Tuesday of this week—about this Reed letter, and in that conversation he said to me, substantially this: "What I mean, in my Reed letter, by Mr. Lincoln's earlier life, is his whole life and history in Illinois. In Illinois and up to the time he left for Washington, he was, as I understand it, a confirmed infidel. What I mean by Mr. Lincoln's later life is his Washington

life, where he associated with religious people, when and where I BELIEVE Mr. Lincoln THOUGHT he became a Christian. I told Mr. Reed all this just before signing the letter spoken of. I knew nothing of Mr. Lincoln's investigation into the subject of Christianity." Mr. Matheny now makes himself plain, clear and consistent with what Lamon records in his life of Lincoln, at page 488, with what Mr. Matheny has often told me, namely: that he believed Mr. Lincoln played a sharp game on the Christians from 1854 to 1860, and with which opinion I am inclined to agree. The very least, that can be said, is, that Mr. Lincoln permitted himself to be misunderstood by the Christians. Lincoln was human, an ambitious man, with his eye on the presidency.

Again—the reverend gentleman produces a letter addressed to me by the Rev. James Smith, of Scotland. The letter states that Mr. Lincoln “did avow his belief in the divine authority, and inspiration of the Scriptures.” Theodore Parker could have said, when living,



the same thing. So can I. Everything that is good is of divine authority. Every book, every oration, every poem that rises to the eloquent, being tinged with enthusiasm, is inspired. Mr. Smith says he placed before Mr. Lincoln arguments designed to prove the divine authority and inspiration of the Scriptures. He asserts that Mr. Lincoln "examined the arguments as a lawyer who is anxious to reach the truth." Mr. Smith came to the city of Springfield, Illinois, about the year of 1848. Let us state well known facts. Mr. Smith came to Springfield about the year of 1848. The speech of Mr. Lincoln to the Bible Society, spoken of by Mr. Smith, was delivered about the year 1858. Mr. Smith's letter to me is dated 1867. Here are about twelve years from the time of Lincoln's speech made at the Bible Society and Mr. Smith's letter to me. How can the reverend gentleman, after so many years, remember what Mr. Lincoln said? Is it not possible that he does not remember correctly? Is it not probable that Mr. Smith's prejudices

make him say what he does say? I will state a fact upon books and arguments on my own personal knowledge. Mr. Lincoln received a book from Dr. Smith on infidelity. He placed it on our law table. He never opened it—never read it to my knowledge, and I think the book so rested, unread and unopened, till after Mr. Lincoln's death. So much for Mr. Lincoln's sweeping and searching investigation. Let us get down to well known facts: Senator Douglas introduced his Kansas-Nebraska bill into the United States Senate in 1854; and it is but too well known in this state that Mr. Lincoln was too busily engaged upon the stump and at the press, including his law business from 1854 to 1856, and from 1856 to 1858, and from 1858 to 1861, to give that sweeping and searching investigation which Dr. Smith says he gave to the subject. Lincoln's heart and mind and soul were wholly absorbed in the great question of human freedom, then quickly and heavily pressing on him; he gave to Christianity no searching investi-

gation. I appeal to the people of the State of Illinois for the truth, that Mr. Lincoln's heart and mind and soul were absorbed on the question of liberty from 1854 to 1861. Mr. Smith does not assert that Mr. Lincoln became a Christian—an Evangelical one; does not assert that he became a church member—a member of Smith's or other church. The reverend gentleman would have gone that length without scruple had he not known that his statement could and would be proved to be false by the records; he could spirt out generalities that mean nothing; he could have his little Christian bitterness without shame and could be untruthful when he pleased. Mr. Smith's character for veracity and integrity were not the best in the world. He came to America an open and avowed infidel, and finding it would not pay he turned Turk or Christian, to suit his purposes. I have asked many, many members of Mr. Smith's church what Mr. Lincoln said at the Bible or Sunday School societies; the reply was: "Only some courteous general remarks

—only glittering generalities, that meant anything or nothing, according to where we stood.” Does not every sane man know that if Mr. Lincoln had become a Christian—had been converted—had been convinced of the truth of the Christian religion, substantially as Dr. Smith states, if his language means anything, that such report, such charge, would not have run through the city like wildfire blown by a hurricane? Silence, secrecy and privacy on such an occasion as this would have been utterly impossible. From what I know of Dr. Smith, his veracity and integrity, I doubt the whole of his testimony. I have heard good people say: “Oh, Mr. Smith was a very able man, but a great old rascal,” and here I leave the Doctor’s letter and his veracity to the world.

Ninian W. Edwards is next examined. Mr. Edwards writes a note to Mr. Reed, dated the 24th day of December, 1872, some fifteen years after Mr. Lincoln made his Sunday School and Bible Society speech; or rather soon after Mr. Smith came to the

city, which was in 1848, stating that Mr. Lincoln told him that he was convinced of the truth of the Christian Religion. Fifteen years is too long a time to make this story of any value, whatever, unless Mr. Edwards had taken a note of what Mr. Lincoln said, which he does not pretend to have done. Human memory is liable to forget, and the things we wish grow and develop in us—enlarge and become certain, as time rolls on. But let us see further. It appears that one Noah Brooks, would-be keeper of Lincoln's conscience while in Washington writes a letter to Mr. Reed, dated the 31st day of December, 1872. In that letter Mr. Brooks says that Mr. Lincoln told him this: "While he, Lincoln, could not fix any definite time, yet it, (the change of heart) was *after* he came here, (Washington) "and," says Mr. Brooks, "I am *positive* that in his own mind he identified it with about the time of Willie's death." Mr. Edwards about 1849, soon after Dr. Smith came to Illinois, and Mr. Brooks about the time of "Willie's" death

in Washington in 1862. If these things be true, Mr. Lincoln changed ends often—backed up and backed down frequently. Some of these things cannot be true. Here are two men, Edwards and Brooks, who state that Mr. Lincoln's change of heart took place at different times and different places. They state that Mr. Lincoln told them what they report. Some things are true, namely: Mr. Lincoln did not tell Mr. Edwards that he changed heart, or was convinced of the truth of the Christian in Springfield, Illinois, about 1849, or he did not tell Mr. Brooks that his change of heart took place in Washington, about 1862, when Willie died. Either the one or the other of these are false, or Mr. Lincoln told both of these men what they state, and that would make Mr. Lincoln tell a lie to both. Is this last alternative an evidence of Mr. Lincoln's change of heart—a manifestation of his religious convictions? But suppose that Mr. Lincoln told neither of these men what they state, then what? They state a falsehood. Who is true, Lin-

coln or these men? Mr. Lincoln is false or they are, and let the people judge. I shall, in due time, quote Mrs. Lincoln's and Nicholay's testimony on this point, to show that neither of these men are correct.

Tom Lewis is introduced in the witness box after Mr. Edwards, and what shall I say of him? All that I wish to say is this that his word adds nothing to Col. Matheny's or Mr. Stuart's testimony, and they know nothing. Mr. Matheny "believes" and Mr. Stuart has "heard." Mr. Lewis' veracity and integrity in this community need no comment. I have heard good men say they would not believe his word under any circumstances, especially so, if he was interested. I hate to state this of Tom, but if he will obtrude himself in this discussion, I cannot help but say a word in self-defense. Mr. Lincoln detested this man, I know. The idea that Mr. Lincoln would go to Tom Lewis and reveal to him his religious convictions, is to me, and to all who know Mr. Lincoln and Tom Lewis, too absurd. Tom

Lewis does not know what Christianity is, theoretically nor practically; he knows better what practical Atheism is. All that Mr. Lewis says is, that Mr. Lincoln told him about the time of Eddie's death, after partly reading Dr. Smith's work, that "he had changed his mind about the Christian religion." What that change was and to what extent is not stated. This statement of Mr. Lewis is made after some twelve or fifteen years have elapsed since Mr. Lincoln told him he had changed his views of the Christian religion. The letter of Mr. Lewis to Mr. Reed was written in 1873. Eddie's death was about the year 1849. Why were not all these sayings and declarations made public during Mr. Lincoln's life? Simply because the dead cannot be interrogated.

Mr. Reed, then, and the last person about Springfield, Illinois, examines or produces a record made by the Hon. Newton Bateman. Dr. Holland, in his *Life of Lincoln*, at page 237, makes Mr. Bateman say—quoting Mr. Lincoln's own words: "If He has a place for



me (in the struggle between the North and the South) and work for me, and I think He has, I believe I am ready. I am nothing but truth in everything. I know I am right because I know that liberty is right, for Christ teaches it, and *Christ is God.*” Dr. Holland and Mr. Bateman both make Mr. Lincoln use the above language, and the Rev. Mr. Reed, in *Scribner's* for 1873, quotes the language with approval, in order to show that Mr. Lincoln believed that Jesus was the Christ of God—His only begotten Son. I know this statement to be false, and I therefore wish to state what I *know* about this matter. Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Bateman scarcely knew one another in 1859–60. It happened that in 1859 Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Bateman occupied adjoining rooms in the State House, the Capitol building. Some of the friends of Mr. Lincoln had made him out a small book containing a list of the voters of Springfield, and how they intended to vote, etc. One day Mr. Lincoln wanted to show the inconsistency of such Christians as —— and others,

who intended to vote for the slavery ticket, called to Mr. Bateman (he then being at the head of the School Department for the State of Illinois) thus: "Come here Mr. School-Master." Mr. Lincoln then read over the list of voters, and no doubt he became indignant or, if you please, eloquent, in his manly denunciations of the present status of Christianity, or the so-called Christian pulpit and ministers. Now the idea that Mr. Lincoln would call in a mere stranger—"Come here, Mr. School-Master"—and reveal to him his religious views, which he withheld from his nearest, oldest, best friends, is to me ridiculous—utterly absurd and unworthy of belief. Mr. Lincoln only called Mr. Bateman into his private rooms to denounce the Christians who were going to vote for the slavery ticket, and why give his own religious views? It was not called for or necessary. Mr. Bateman says that in that conversation Mr. Lincoln said: "I am not a Christian." As soon as Mr. Holland's *Life of Lincoln* appeared, I went in search of Mr. Bateman

and found him in his office. He and I had several good-natured conversations over this matter. My notes of our conversations bear date December 3d, 12th and 28th, 1865. Our conversations were private, I suppose. However, I can say this much: That Mr Bateman expressly told me Mr. Lincoln was, in the conversations related in Holland, talking *politics* and not religion, nor Christianity, nor morals, as such. I have persistently since 1865, dogged Mr. Bateman for the privilege of publishing my notes, or to give me a letter explaining what Mr. Lincoln did say, so that I might make known the facts of the case. Mr. Bateman as stoutly refused as I was persistent in my applications. Mr. Bateman, however, wrote me a letter, dated March 8th, 1867, but marked it confidential. This letter will tolerably well answer for my notes. Here things rested for six years, till the Rev. James A. Reed's unfortunate and foolish, not to say insane lecture roused up men to a renewed discussion of Mr. Lincoln's legitimacy, as well as his

religion. The lecture will be found in *Scribner's*. This lecture aroused me, and I again wrote to Mr. Bateman, on the 20th of July, 1873 for the former privilege or request. He remained silent. Again, about the 3d day of August, 1873, I wrote to Mr. Bateman asking, among other things, the privilege spoken of before, or to give me a letter to make public, or to let me publish his letter to me of the 8th of March. I sent him a copy of his letter; he answered me by letter dated the 13th of August, 1873, that he had *forgotten* the letter, a copy of which I had sent him; or, to use Mr. Bateman's own words, "I had forgotten the letter to you, of which you have sent me a copy, dated the 7th of March, 1867, and you have my permission to publish it." Mr. Bateman, after six years, had wholly forgotten this letter, and honestly, too. How easy and natural for Messrs. Matheny and Stuart to forget after a longer time. Records stand. Memory often fails, and honestly so with Mr. Bateman, Col. Mathney and Mr. Stuart,

as I verily believe. Sometime in August, 1873, Mr. Bateman and I had a very friendly conversation over this subject matter, and in that conversation Mr. Bateman expressly told me that the accounts of Mr. Lincoln's conversation with Mr. Bateman, as related in Holland, *is colored*.

I now here give a copy of Mr. Bateman's letter to me, dated the 8th March, 1867:

SPRINGFIELD, ILL., March 7th, 1867.

"I have yours of the 7th instant. I am too unwell and too busy to write or think, today—will try to speak of the subject of your note when I can. My aversion to publicity in such matters is intense. The tone, manner, etc., of Mr. Lincoln was deeply, solemnly religious; it inspired me with awe. He was APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES of moral and religious truth to the duties of the hour, the condition of the country, and the conduct of the public men—ministers of the Gospel. I HAD NO THOUGHT of orthodoxy or heterodoxy, Unitarianism, Trinitarianism or any other ism, during the whole conversation, and I DON'T SUPPOSE OR BELIEVE HE (Lincoln) HAD. The room was full of God

and high truths, and the awfulness of coming events. Sects and dogmas in such a presence! He was alone with the great God and the great problem of his country's future and his own, and I but heard the communings of his soul.

Yours truly,

NEWTON BATEMAN.

Hon. W. H. Herndon.

This letter shows that Mr. Lincoln was talking politics, *applying* the principles of moral and religious truth to the condition of the country, ministers of the Gospel. Mr. Lincoln was not making Mr. Bateman his confessor; was not giving his views of Christianity to Mr. Bateman. The talk was over the little book containing a list of the voters of the city of Springfield, and it would have been a sudden, wide and deep—astonishing departure for Mr. Lincoln to state his views of religion. If Holland's account is true, books changed quickly from a list of voters to the New Testament, "which Mr. Lincoln took out of his bosom." But Mr. Bateman says he had no thought of

orthodoxy, etc., during the whole conversation, and says he, "I don't suppose or believe he (Lincoln) had." Mr. Lincoln was not even thinking about Christianity, and how express his ideas about it, and why do so, as related by Holland's fictitious and romantic *Life of Lincoln*? The truth is, that Mr. Lincoln is misrepresented: the account *colored*. Lincoln never said *Christ is God*, and Mr. Bateman's letter, I think, settles that question forever. To use Bateman's language, Holland's account of Lincoln and Bateman's conversation "*is colored*." Yes! colored, highly colored and stiffly starched. This letter of Mr. Bateman shows clearly that the account of Mr. Lincoln's religious views, etc., as reported in Holland, is colored, is false.

I promised the reading world—said to it in the Abbott letter dated 1870—that if I could but get the seal of secrecy of privacy removed from Mr. Bateman's conversation with me, (Dec. 3d, 12th and 28th, 1865) I could and would prove Holland's account

of Lincoln's religious views and declarations untrue—false. The privacy has been removed by the written consent of Mr. Bateman, and I think I have fulfilled my promise to the letter; I feel that I have redeemed my word. I consider this a fixed fact, soon to go into history, never to be substantially contradicted nor denied. Such falsehoods as those contained in Holland, can only live by suffering.

It is said by Mr. Brooks (somehow connected with the New York *Tribune*) that Mr. Lincoln told him that his change of heart took place in Washington, about the time of Willie's death. I now wish to introduce a witness whose testimony no one will even doubt. He shared, next to Mr. Lincoln's wife, in nearness, privacy and dearness. The man is John H. Nicolay, Lincoln's private secretary, a keen observer and a shrewd man. Mr. Nicolay is not only made to say, to use the words of Mr. Reed, but he does say, "But I am *very sure* he (Lincoln) gave no *outward* indications of his



mind having undergone any change in that regard while here." I will, however, give the letter in full, to ease the mind of Mr. Reed. The letter reads thus:

## EXECUTIVE MANSION

WASHINGTON, May 27th, 1865.

FRIEND HERNDON: I have this morning received your note of the 23d inst. and with great pleasure answer it at once. Mr. Lincoln did not, to my knowledge, in any way, change his religious ideas, opinions or beliefs from the time he left Springfield to the day of his death. I do not know just what they were never having heard him explain them in detail, but I am *very sure* he gave no outward indication of his mind having undergone any change in that regard while here.

Yours truly,

JNO. G. NICOLAY.

Hon. W. H. Herndon.

If any man ought to know Mr. Lincoln's religious views, or rather their change while in Washington, Mr. Nicolay is that man. Mr. Lincoln loved Nicolay—trusted him. Nicolay was a close observer, and he would

have discovered Lincoln's change, if any. Lincoln would have told him of the change.

But I promised to introduce the evidence of Mrs. Lincoln to show that neither Dr. Smith nor Mr. Edwards, nor Mr. Brooks was correct in what they state about Mr. Lincoln's change of views. It will be presumed—will be admitted by all men that the bosom companion—the wife of Mr. Lincoln, should know the secrets of his soul; that husband and wife do reveal—do tell to each other everything that touches their feelings or interest. I examined Mrs. Lincoln at the St. Nicholas Hotel, in Springfield, Illinois, some time after the death of Mr. Lincoln, touching, among other things, Mr. Lincoln's supposed change of heart. She gave me a short history of herself at my special request—some account of the customs at the White House—something about Seward, Johnson, Sumner, etc., etc. I hope she will not, like Matheny, Stuart and Bateman, forget. Among other things, Mrs. Lincoln substantially said to me:

“Mr. Lincoln had no hope and no faith in the usual acceptance of these words, and Lincoln’s maxim and philosophy were: ‘What is to be will be, and no cares, (prayers) of ours can arrest the decree.’ Mr. Lincoln never joined any church. He was a religious man always, as I think. He *first thought*—to say think—about this subject was when Willie died—*never before*; he read the Bible a good deal about 1864. He felt *religious*, more than ever before, about the time he went to Gettysburg. Mr. Lincoln was not a technical Christian. \* \* \* I told him about Seward’s intention. He said in reply—“I shall rule myself—*shall obey my own conscience and follow God in it,*” etc.

Here is the wife of Mr. Lincoln who declares that Mr. Lincoln never thought of the subject of Christianity in Springfield; she draws the clear distinction between RELIGION and CHRISTIANITY. My knowledge of Mr. Lincoln, and the facts of Mr. Lincoln’s life in Springfield, will bear her out. Mrs. Lincoln is a close observer, a woman of intellect, a

good judge of human nature and knew her husband thoroughly inside and outside. Mr. Lincoln's maxim and philosophy were "What is to be will be, and *no prayers* of ours can arrest the decree." And if this is—taking Mrs. Lincoln's words as true—what becomes of the Christian idea of prayer? What becomes of Noah Brooks' cant and twaddle about Lincoln's praying? What becomes of Dr. Smith's ideas of Mr. Lincoln's sweeping and searching research, and the conviction springing therefrom of the divine authority and inspiration of the Scriptures? What becomes of Mr. Edward's evidence that Mr. Lincoln, in Springfield, was convinced of the truth of the Christian religion; and in short, what becomes of all the cant and twaddle about Mr. Lincoln's Christianity?

I have now reviewed the evidences of the Rev. James A. Reed, and I think I have done so fairly. The whole weight of the evidence, including what Reed, Holland and Lamon adduce and bring forward, is in favor of the idea that Mr. Lincoln died an

unbeliever—in favor of his continued infidelity.

What I say in this lecture is only intended to cover Mr. Lincoln's life in Illinois, though I could not help adducing Mr. Nicolay and Mrs. Lincoln. I do not mean to trench upon the grounds of another. Let us wait patiently on events, watch for the unfolding and development of facts in the future.

One word concerning this discussion about Mr. Lincoln's Christian views. It is important in this: 1st, it settles a historic fact. 2d, it makes it possible to write a true history of a man free from the fear of fire and stake. 3d, it assures the reading world that the life of Mr. Lincoln will be truly written. 4th, it will be a warning forever to all untrue men, that the life they have lived will be dragged out to public view. 5th, it should convince the Christian pulpit and press that it is impossible in this day and generation, at least in America, to daub up sin, and make a hero out of a fool, a knave, or a villain, which Mr.

Lincoln was not. Some true spirit will drag the fraud, and lie out to the light of day. 6th, Its tendencies will be to arrest and put a stop to romantic biographies, and now let it be written in history and on Mr. Lincoln's tomb—"He died an unbeliever."











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