

ARTICLE III,

THE RELIGIOUS OPINIONS AND LIFE OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN.BY THE REVEREND WILLIAM H. BATES, D.D.,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

A VERY dear friend, a captain in the Confederate Army, a St. Louis lawyer, and a Presbyterian elder, has recently sent to me a pamphlet copy of an address by the Hon. George L. Christian, on Abraham Lincoln. This address was delivered before the R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Confederate Veterans, at Richmond, Virginia, October 29, 1909. The friend kindly said he sent it to me, rather than to any other person, because of my "honesty, love of research for truth regardless of consequences," and he asked a "report on it" and my "opinion in full."

The first paragraph of the address concludes thus: "I wish to state in the outset that what I shall say on this occasion will be said in no spirit of carping criticism, with no desire to do injustice to my remarkable subject, and will be as free from sectional prejudice and passion as one who has suffered as I have, by the conduct of Mr. Lincoln and his followers, can make it; and I shall also strive to say what I do say *solely in the interest of the truth of history.*"

Surely, that sounds well; and the fond anticipation was raised that, in reading what should follow, there would be found confirmation of opinions that had been formed from reading history and from hearing those talk who had personal acquaintance with Mr. Lincoln. But when the first sentence of his third paragraph was read,—“Whenever the

good character of a person is put in issue, the party avouching that good character challenges the opposite side to show, by all legitimate means, the contrary of the fact thus put in issue,"—an interrogation point was raised as to what was coming, and the point was straightened out into a large exclamation mark when the reading of the pamphlet was finished.

An incident was recalled. In a southern New York parish early one Saturday afternoon, a young man came to the manse and asked that a wedding service be performed as soon as we could reach the place where the nuptial event was to occur. He apparently was very poor,—too impecunious to furnish a carriage to convey us the three or four miles thither. So, as ministerial exercise was really needed, the proposition was made to walk the distance with him. Duly arriving at a miserable shack in the midst of a piece of woods, there was a wedding that made a memorable experience of a lifetime! Returning, a parishioner was met who once lived in that neighborhood, and to an inquiry as to what sort of people those were, he answered: "If you had raked the infernal regions over with a fine-tooth comb you couldn't have scraped together a worse lot!"

As page after page was read,—oh, so pitifully painful,—again and again the thought persistently obtruded itself that Mr. Christian had been performing the fine-tooth-comb act. He seems to have gotten together all the awful things that have been said in derogation of Mr. Lincoln; at least if there are any worse ones I certainly never have heard of them.

But Lincoln is not the only man who has been maligned and vilified by his contemporaries. Washington was besmirched all over with the black pigments of a malicious rhetoric. Take this as a specimen: "As for you, sir, treacher-

ous in private friendship and a hypocrite in public life, the world will be puzzled to decide whether you are an apostate or an impostor; whether you have abandoned good principles or whether you ever had any." And this: "His character can only be respectable while he is not known; he is arbitrary, avaricious, ostentatious; without skill as a soldier, he crept into fame by the places he has held, and by the success of the cause he espoused." And this also: "If ever a nation was debauched by a man, the United States has been debauched by Washington." There is plenty more of the same sort. And all this about the man whom filtered, clarified, discounted history pronounces to be "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen"!

And it may be recalled that there is One who deserves to be held in supreme esteem, whom his contemporaries accused of being a glutton, a winebibber, and of consorting with the disreputable (Matt. xi. 19); yes, and of being insane and even possessed of a devil (John x. 20)!

Mr. Christian says: "We think it can be safely affirmed that Mr. Lincoln was one of the most *secretive, crafty, cunning* and *contradictory* characters in all history, and therein lies, we believe, the true reason why the world deems him great. In short, he and his unscrupulous eulogists have, for the time being, outwitted and deceived the public" (p. 12). According to him Mr. Lincoln is bad, all bad, and only bad: no relieving or redeeming characteristics are given. In summation he says: "And we further believe that if the cause espoused by Mr. Lincoln had not been deemed successful, and if the 'assassin's bullet' had not contributed so greatly to immortalize him, his name would now be bandied about as *only that of an ordinary, coarse, secretive, cunning man and wily politician, and one of the greatest tyrants of any*

age" (p. 38). All this, with ample atrocious quotation besides that cannot here be noted, said "solely in the interest of the truth of history"!

Henry Waterson is regarded as a Southerner of the Southerners. An ex-Congressman close by pronounces his oration on Abraham Lincoln at Chicago, February 12, 1895, one of the masterpieces of American literature. Mr. Waterson has a vision: "I see him lying dead there in the capital of the nation to which he had rendered 'the last full measure of his devotion,' the flag of his country around him, the world in mourning; and, asking myself how could any man have hated that man, I ask you, How can any man refuse homage to his memory? Surely, he was one of God's elect, not in any sense a creature of circumstances or accident. Recurring again to the doctrine of inspiration, I say again, he was inspired of God, and I cannot see how any one who believes in that doctrine can regard him as anything else" (p. 45). Let the judgment of the great Southern editor be set over against what the Southern lawyer has adduced, or would adduce.

Personally, I do not care much for the contention about Lincoln's professional and civil career. That will be settled in due time. Time, love of justice and truth, honor, fair-play, national sentiment, will adjust the civic verdict in regard to him as they have respecting Washington. President Taft, in his address at the unveiling of the Lincoln statue at Frankfort, Kentucky, November 8, 1911, said: "Lincoln had the most judicial temperament of any man in history." George S. Boutwell, more than twenty-five years ago, writing upon "Lincoln in History," said: "I venture to claim for Abraham Lincoln the place next to Washington, whether we have regard to private character, to intellectual qualities,

to public services, or to the weight of obligation laid upon the country and upon mankind His fame will increase and spread with the knowledge of Republican institutions, with the expansion and power of the English-speaking race, and with the deeper respect which civilization will create for whatever is attractive in personal character, wise in the administration of public affairs, just in policy, or liberal and comprehensive in the exercise of constitutional and extra-constitutional powers." ¹ Surely the judgment of history will crystallize into an estimate not below the opinion of these two distinguished publicists.

But I do care much about what is alleged in regard to the religious, or rather irreligious, character of Mr. Lincoln. In most of the twenty or more Lives of Lincoln I have seen, his religious opinions and life are not treated of at all; in a very few only cursorily; in none adequately and satisfactorily,—perhaps because when they were written the time had not come to do so. But that time has now come.

In the pamphlet (pp. 10-12) are quotations: "Lincoln was a deep-grounded infidel. He disliked and despised churches. He never entered a church except to scoff and ridicule. On coming from a church he would mimic the preacher. . . . He never changed on this subject; he lived and died a deep-grounded infidel" (Herndon). "When he went to church at all, he went to mock, and came away to mimic" (Lamon). "Lincoln was enthusiastic in his infidelity" (Col. James H. Matheny). "He was an avowed and open infidel, and sometimes bordered on atheism went further against Christian beliefs and doctrines and principles than any man I ever heard; he shocked me" (Hon. John T. Stuart). Lamon

¹ Allan Thorndike Rice, *Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln*, pp. 107, 187.

quotes Herndon as saying: "Lincoln told me a thousand times that he did not believe the Bible was a revelation from God as the Christian world contends . . . and that Jesus was not the son of God." And Mr. Nicolay, Lincoln's private secretary, is quoted as saying: "Mr. Lincoln did not, to my knowledge, in any way, change his religious views, opinions or beliefs, from the time he left Springfield to the day of his death."

These extracts, and more to the same import, are adduced and indorsed by Mr. Christian as late as October 29, 1909, and the speaker says that "it is wrong, and nothing short of an outrage on the truth of history to assert that Mr. Lincoln was, or ever claimed to be a Christian; that such an assertion can only reflect on those who make it"; and he adds: "Surely those who are so reckless as to misrepresent a fact of this nature will not hesitate to misrepresent any other fact that it suits them to misrepresent or to misstate" (p. 12).

Arnold, Binns, Carpenter, Curtis, Holland, in their Lives of Lincoln, speak favorably and sympathetically of his religious character and of his Christian faith. These extracts are from Lives by Ward H. Lamon and William H. Herndon, law partners of Lincoln; and they furnish very much, if not all, of what is now reproduced derogatory to him. But do these quotations and accordant output tell the truth?

It is, alas! only too true that in Lincoln's early life he said and did irreligious — yes, infidel — things that would give color to what is charged against him; that, as plainly appears, was in accord with the prevailing temper of the times; but that these bald allegations are justified is altogether another matter.

To appreciate the situation some dates are needful. Lincoln was born in Kentucky February 12, 1809; he moved to

Indiana in 1816, where he had all his school education of not more than six months; his mother died in 1818, her place being taken by an excellent stepmother the next year; he moved to Illinois in 1830; became clerk in a pioneer country store at New Salem in 1831 at the age of twenty-two; was elected to the State Legislature in 1834, and again in 1836; studying law, he removed in 1837 to Springfield, then a village of between one and two thousand inhabitants, and was admitted to the bar the same year; was married in 1842; elected to Congress in 1846, and to the Presidency in 1860 and 1864; he died on April 15, 1865.

New Salem, according to Lamon, "was pre-eminently a community of free-thinkers in matters of religion." "It was no distinction, either good or bad, no honor and no shame," to hold infidel views. According to Herndon, "It was here that Mr. Lincoln became acquainted with a class of men the world never saw the like of before or since. They were large men,—large in body and large in mind. They were a bold, daring and reckless sort of men. With these men Mr. Lincoln was thrown; with them he lived, and with them he moved, and almost had his being. They were sceptics all—scoffers some." "Volney's 'Ruins' and Paine's 'Age of Reason' passed from hand to hand, and furnished food for the evening's discussion in the tavern and village store. Lincoln read both of these books and thus assimilated them into his own being. He prepared an extended essay—called by many, a book—in which he made an argument against Christianity, striving to prove that the Bible was not inspired, and therefore not God's revelation, and that Jesus Christ was not the Son of God." It is said that Lincoln's friend and employer, Samuel Hill, fearing the effect of this production on the young man's political future, "snatched the manuscript

from his hands, and thrust it into the stove," where it was consumed. Mr. Herndon continues: "Mr. Lincoln moved to this city [then the village of Springfield] in 1837, and here became acquainted with various men of his own way of thinking. At that time they called themselves free-thinkers, or free-thinking men. I remember all these things distinctly: for I was with them, heard them, and was one of them."

Lincoln was then twenty-seven years of age. Herndon hedges a bit by allowing that "much of what he then said may properly be credited to the impetuosity and exuberance of youth." But it seems not a little singular that Lamon and Herndon, so far as I have been able to discover, *do not quote one word of Lincoln's utterances to substantiate their charges!* Quotations from his alleged infidel book, inspired by Paine's "Age of Reason" and Volney's "Ruins," would have been in order. William Eleroy Curtis, in his "The True Abraham Lincoln," says: "He prepared a review of these books, which it is supposed he intended to read before a literary society that had been organized in the neighborhood. . . . His essay at New Salem was nothing more than a presentation of the views of two famous unbelievers without personal endorsement" (p. 376).

Lincoln's inward religious sentiment and feeling are shown in an incident that, chronologically, should be put in here. A lady eighty-seven years old — one of the most remarkable women I have ever met — was very recently "reminiscing" in my presence, and here is one of the stories she told: "It was, I think, in May, 1858 or 1859, that I was making a night-trip from Chicago to St. Louis on the Chicago and Alton. That was before the days of Pullman. The railroad was narrow-gauged and primitive. The cars and their seats and windows were small. Among the passengers were an

old gentleman and his wife, near whom I took a seat. I wrapped a shawl around my head and dozed away for hours. I was awakened by a gush of fresh air and the fragrance of flowers as some ladies entered. In the party was a man, very tall and very homely, who took a seat opposite mine. As day began to break, he threw up the sash, leaned his head out, and held his hat in place with his right hand, while his body filled the seat and his legs extended to the middle of the aisle. As if enraptured by the beauty of the sunrise, unconscious of the presence of any one, he began to croon, in a tender, reflective voice, an old-fashioned hymn tune, the words of which soon became audible:—

‘When all Thy mercies, O my God,
 My rising soul surveys,
 Transported with the view, I’m lost
 In wonder, love and praise.’

There were two other stanzas from this hymn of Addison’s, but the first one was repeated over and over again. As the conductor came along, I quietly asked, ‘Who is this man?’ ‘Abraham Lincoln,’ he replied; ‘and he is on his way to a debate with Stephen A. Douglass.’ I had heard much of the ability of Douglass; and now I had seen, yes, and *heard*, his antagonist. The simplicity, the apparently sincere devoutness, the religiousness of the man, made an impression that was indelibly stamped on my memory.” This, surely, does not savor of an infidelity that “bordered on atheism.”

Mr. Lincoln delivered in Cooper Institute, New York, February 27, 1860, the great speech that brought him nationwide notice and probably laid the foundation for his nomination to the Presidency. Immediately after, he visited his son Robert, a student at Harvard; and among the eight New England cities in which he spoke, was Norwich, Connecticut.

Says Lamon: "On the morning after the Norwich speech, Mr. Lincoln was met, or is said to have been met, in the cars by a preacher, one Gulliver,—a name suggestive of fictions. Gulliver says he told Mr. Lincoln that he thought his speech 'the most remarkable one he ever heard.' Lincoln doubted his sincerity; but Gulliver persisted. . . . Lincoln found he had in hand a clerical sycophant, and a little politician at that,—a class of beings whom he most heartily despised. Whereupon he began to quiz the fellow." To a question of Mr. Lincoln, "Gulliver was equal to the occasion and answered with an opinion which Mr. Bunsby might have delivered, and died, leaving to the world a reputation perfected by that single saying: . . . Gulliver closed the interview with the cant peculiar to his kind." Here is the "cant": "I say with a full heart: Be true to your principles; and we will be true to you, and God will be true to us all." Lamon's full-page account of the interview thus ends: "To which modest, pious, and original observation, Mr. Lincoln responded, 'I say Amen to that! Amen to that!'" (p. 422). And who was this "preacher, one Gulliver"?

Rev. John Putnam Gulliver, D.D., LL.D., was graduated from Yale in 1840, and from Andover in 1845; was pastor of a Congregational Church in Norwich, Connecticut, and in Chicago; president of Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois; pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Binghamton, New York; Stone professor (a professorship created for him) of the "Relation of Christianity and Science," in Andover, where he died, January 25, 1894.

One of the most tenderly cherished recollections of my life is the acquaintance with, and peculiarly warm friendship of, this man. He told me of this interview. It was written up by him, and published in *The Independent* of September 1,

1864, and is reproduced in Carpenter's "Six Months at the White House" (pp. 308-317). I confess that the temperature of my indignation is raised quite a number of calories by this contemptuous and contemptible — yes, brutal — treatment of one of the manliest men I ever knew,— a refined gentleman, a cultured clergyman, a splendid preacher, an erudite scholar, whose only offense to Mr. Lamon can be, is that he — a stranger — is a *Christian* minister. The animus is apparent.

In astronomical observatories, in order to determine observations with perfect exactness, due allowance has to be made for what is called, as ascertained, the "personal equation" that pertains to the vision of the observer. Some eyes are astigmatic — incorrectly focused; some, strabismic — cross-eyed; some, myopic — near-sighted; some, hypermetropic — far-sighted, and so on. It does seem as though when the infidel coterie of Springfield lawyers — if the world never saw the like of which before, let us hope it never will again! — views Mr. Lincoln religiously, they apparently possess all the optical defects in the catalogue put together in one! Close at hand lies a treatise that has seventy-three pages on Percentage, seven of which are devoted to Discount. There is other than mathematical discount. So, in appraising the value of these contemporary infidel testimonies, most manifestly large discount should be made for their "personal equation."

Lincoln said, "History is not history unless it tells the truth." Lamon's atrocious treatment of Dr. Gulliver,— his personal equation incapacitating him to tell the truth about the Norwich interview,— his similar treatment of Lincoln's Springfield pastor, and also his misrepresentation of Lincoln as a temperance man, can hardly help raising interrogation marks as to his reliability as a historian in other matters.

One feels better when his statements are confirmed by others. But certain it is that the impression made by Lincoln's law partners in regard to his religious opinions and life—as will be farther shown to appear by facts yet to be adduced—is *not according to truth*.

Is it true that "he never entered a church except to scoff and ridicule"? Is it true that "when he went to church at all, he went to mock and came away to mimic"? The copyright of the book making these affirmations is as late as 1872, seven years after his death.

Miss Tarbell, in her "Life of Lincoln," speaks of "his weekly attendance at the First Presbyterian Church" of Springfield, and says that "he was regular in his attendance . . . as all his old neighbors testify. In fact, Lincoln all his life, went regularly to church." And she speaks of "the serious attention which he gave the sermons he heard." "If Lincoln was not at this period [the early Springfield period, from 1837, and on] a man of strictly orthodox belief, he certainly was, if we accept his own words, profoundly religious" (vol. ii. p. 238). In Washington he attended the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church. Its "Lincoln Pew"¹ is a Mecca, so to speak, dear to multitudes of patri-

¹ In August, 1913, Rev. Wallace Radcliffe, D.D., pastor of the church—the "Presidents' Church" it is called—was on the Brittany coast of France, and upon a hotel table he saw an English newspaper in which was the subjoined poem on "Lincoln's Pew," to which there was nothing attached to indicate its authorship.

"Within the historic church both eye and soul
Perceived it. 'Twas the pew where Lincoln sat—
The only Lincoln God hath given to men—
Olden among the modern seats of prayer,
Dark like the 'sixties, place and past akin.
All else has changed, but this remains the same,
A sanctuary in a sanctuary.

otic and pious hearts. While the auditorium has been repewed in light wood, that pew remains in dark wood, as when he occupied it, in which, as is well known, he was habitually a reverent and attentive listener. The present pastor of the church recently stated as a fact, which has not before got into the public prints,¹ that at times Mr. Lincoln came to the midweek prayer meeting.² He would come after the service had begun—sitting away back and leaving just before the close, so as to avoid observation and remark. With the awful burdens resting upon him, he seemed to feel that there was something at the prayer meeting which he needed and could get. Scoffers are not habitual and devout church-

“Where Lincoln prayed!—Such worshipers as he
Mixt faith and anguish melting into prayer
Upon the burning altar of God’s fane,
A nation’s altar even as his own!

“Where Lincoln prayed!—Such worshipers as he
Make thin ranks down the ages. Would’st thou know
His spirit suppliant? Then must thou feel
War’s fiery baptism, taste hate’s bitter cup,
Spend similar sweat of blood vicarious,
And sound like cry, ‘If it be possible!’
From stricken heart in new Gethsemane.

“Who saw him there are gone, as he is gone;
The pew remains, with what God gave him there,
And all the world through him. So let it be—
One of the people’s shrines.”

Returning to this country, Dr. Radcliffe found that the author is Rev. Lyman Whitney Allen, D.D., pastor of the South Park Presbyterian Church of Newark, New Jersey, who, upon an occasion of his preaching in the New York Avenue Church, received the inspiration and impulse which produced the poem.

¹This was written in September, 1911.

²An authority for this is Mr. J. D. McChesney, disbursing officer of the Geological Survey and a deacon of the church, who says he repeatedly met Mr. Lincoln there.

goers, and "infidels" do not go to prayer meetings for spiritual comfort and help.

None of the many Lives of Lincoln that I have examined tell of, or even refer to, his connection with Father Chiniquy, recounted in "Fifty Years in the Church of Rome." This Catholic priest, horrified by what he saw among his brethren and by hierarchical tyranny, abandoned that communion and took his congregation of French colonists at St. Anne, Kankakee County, Illinois, over to Protestantism. But before the final break, his alleged ecclesiastical insubordination led to repeated efforts to crush him. Upon infamous charges he was put upon trial at the May term, 1856, of the court at Urbana, Illinois. Abraham Lincoln was one of the three lawyers to defend him. Perjured testimony, as Mr. Lincoln believed it to be and as his client knew it to be, made the issue look exceedingly dark for the priest. Said the lawyer: "The only way to be sure of a favorable verdict to-morrow is, that God Almighty would take our part and show your innocence. Go to Him and pray, for He alone can save you" (p. 662). Accordingly, the priest was in prayer from eleven o'clock at night to three in the morning, when such deliverance appeared as secured the acquittal of the accused man, and his accusers fled, it is said to Canada, to escape the penalties of perjury.

The other two lawyers, who had done little work on the case compared with what Lincoln had done, charged Mr. Chiniquy one thousand dollars each for their services, but Mr. Lincoln would not charge him anything; yet under pressure from his grateful client he reluctantly accepted a promissory note for fifty dollars to reimburse him for traveling and hotel expenses. But in the talk which led to this arrangement, Mr. Lincoln said: "Your enemies are devils in-

carnate. The plot they had concocted against you is the most hellish one I ever knew. But the way you have been saved from their hands, the appearance of that young and intelligent Miss Moffat, who was really sent by God in the very hour of need when, I confess again, I thought everything was nearly lost, is one of the most extraordinary occurrences I ever saw. It makes me remember what I have too often forgotten, and what my mother often told me when young, that our God is a prayer-hearing God. This good thought, sown into my young heart by that mother's hand, was just in my mind when I told you 'Go and pray — God alone can save you'' (p. 693). It is submitted that this does not sound much like the talk of an infidel; and this event occurred years before he acceded to the Presidency and when he was intimately associated with his law partners who vouch for his infidelity.

Chapter LXI. of Mr. Chiniqy's book has its content-heading begin thus: "Abraham Lincoln a True Man of God and a True Disciple of the Gospel"; and in the first paragraph the author asks the question; "How can this rail-splitter have so easily raised himself to the highest range of human thought and philosophy?" And here, in his opinion, is the answer: "The secret of this was, that Lincoln had spent a great part of his life at the school of Christ, and that he had meditated his teaching to an extent unsuspected by the world. I found in him the most perfect example of Christianity I ever met" (p. 711). For such opinion he proceeds to give substantiating reasons. This of course belongs to later years.

Mr. Newton Bateman, Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Illinois, occupied a room adjoining and opening into the Executive Chamber at Springfield, which

Mr. Lincoln used as an office during the Presidential campaign of 1860, and for seven months the two men saw each other nearly every day. From Dr. Holland's account of what passed between them, take these few sentences: "Mr. Bateman, I am not a Christian — God knows I would be one I know there is a God, and that He hates injustice and slavery. I see the storm coming, and I know that His hand is in it. If He has a place and work for me, and I think He has, I believe I am ready. I am nothing, but truth is everything. I know I am right, because I know that liberty is right, for Christ teaches it, and Christ is God. I have told them that a house divided against itself cannot stand, and Christ and reason say the same, and they will find it so."

Much of religious import was uttered on this occasion; but before they separated, Mr. Bateman, a Christian gentleman, remarked: "I have not supposed that you were accustomed to think so much upon this class of subjects. Certainly your friends are ignorant of the sentiments you have expressed to me." Mr. Lincoln quickly replied: "I know they are. I am obliged to appear different to them; but I think more on these subjects than upon all others, and I have done so for years; and I am willing that *you* should know it."

The law partners hotly attacked this account. Says Mr. Lamon: "Mr. Bateman is a respectable citizen, whose general reputation for truth and veracity is not to be impeached; but his story, as reported in Holland's Life, is so inconsistent with Mr. Lincoln's whole character, that it must be rejected as altogether incredible. . . . There is no dealing with Mr. Bateman except by a flat contradiction." Mr. Herndon says: "I do not remember ever seeing the words *Jesus* or *Christ* in print as uttered by Mr. Lincoln. If he had used these words, they can be found. He uses the word *God* but

seldom. I never heard him use the name of Christ or Jesus but to confute the idea that he was *the Christ*, the only and truly begotten Son of God, as the Christian world understands it." Here seems to be a place for a generous application of the personal-equation principle, and of discount; for, afterwards, when Holland was called in question, Mr. Bateman averred that he was substantially correct. Evidently there was not a little going on in Mr. Lincoln's mind and life about which his intimates knew nothing.

Still further as to his esteem for Christ: When Mr. Lincoln was President, in order to circumvent some alleged Romish machinations against us abroad, he wished Father Chiniquy to become one of the Secretaries to our Ambassador to France, saying to him: "I am in need of Christian men in every department of the public service, but more in those high positions." But Mr. Chiniquy would not yield to the President's pleadings, because of what he felt to be his duties as an ambassador of Christ. At last the President said: "Yes! Yes! You are ambassador of a greater Prince than I am"; and also, "You are right! You are right! There is nothing so great under heaven as to be an ambassador of Christ."¹

On the morning of February 11, 1861, Mr. Lincoln left Springfield, never to return alive. From the platform of the railway car, every man in the crowd standing with head uncovered in the fast-falling rain and snow, with voice husky from intense feeling, he said: "To-day I leave you. I go to assume a task more difficult than that which has devolved upon any other man since the days of Washington. Unless the great God, who assisted him, shall be with and aid me, I must fail; but if the same omniscient mind and almighty

¹ Fifty Years in the Church of Rome, p. 693.

arm that directed and protected him shall guide and support me, I shall not fail,—I shall succeed. Let us all pray that the God of our fathers may not forsake us now. To him I commend you all. Permit me to ask, that, with equal sincerity and faith, you will invoke his wisdom and guidance for me.”

No President had ever before asked the people, in a public address, to pray for him. By “fellows of the baser sort” not only, but by some who had been close to him and yet knew him not, the request was bandied about as a joke—“old Abe’s last”—and was regarded as an evidence of both his weakness and hypocrisy.

On his way to Washington occurred an incident at Columbus, Ohio, which unmistakably evidenced the sincere religiousness of the man. Rev. George B. Stewart, D. D., LL.D., President of the Auburn Theological Seminary, under date of November 14, 1912, writes me: “A public reception was given to President-elect Lincoln in the State Capitol, during which he stood in the rotunda by the stairway leading to the Senate Chamber or the House. My brother, who was about twelve years of age, and I, about seven, were in the line that passed by the President and shook hands with him. Just ahead of me was an old woman, plainly clad, with a shawl over her head. She seemed to me, as a little boy, to be very old, but may not have been such in fact. When she reached the President, she took his hand in both of hers and said: ‘God bless you, my son.’ He took her hand in his and bending down from what seemed to me to be a great height, she put her hand upon his head and she repeated the blessing, ‘God bless you, my son.’ To which he responded, ‘Amen, mother.’ She then passed and it came my turn to shake hands with the Presi-

dent. As he took my hand I looked up into his face and saw the tears rolling down his cheeks. The incident is burned into my memory as one of those ineffaceable events of life. I never saw him again alive. The next time I saw him was when he was lying in his coffin, in state, in the same rotunda, within a few feet of the spot where I had witnessed the above incident four years before."

Isaac N. Arnold, a man intimate with the President, in his "Life of Abraham Lincoln" says: "It is very strange that any reader of Lincoln's speeches and writings should have the hardihood to charge him with a want of Christian feeling. . . . From the time he left Springfield to his death, he not only himself constantly prayed for divine assistance, but constantly asked the prayers of his friends for himself and his country. Declarations of his trust in God and his belief in the efficiency of prayer pervade his state papers, letters and speeches" (pp. 446-447).

Noah Brooks, in some "reminiscences," tells of Mr. Lincoln, after his accession to the Presidency, saying to him solemnly and slowly: "I should be the most presumptuous blockhead upon this footstool, if I for one day thought I could discharge the duties which have come upon me since I came into this place, without the aid and enlightenment of One who is stronger than all others." On the occasion of a visit to him by some members of the Christian Commission, Holland relates that "It was during this interview that the fact was privately communicated to a member of the Commission that Mr. Lincoln was in the habit of spending an early hour each day in prayer." Did space permit, pages of quotation¹ could be made from his own words and from in-

¹Ample quotations of this sort have been made by Rev. Dr. William J. Johnston in his book published this year,—"Abraham Lincoln the Christian."

terviews with him, proving to a demonstration the genuine religiousness of the man.

One incident, however, must not be omitted. General Daniel E. Sickles had his right leg shattered by a bullet at Gettysburg. He was taken to the military hospital at Washington with one chance in five hundred to live. The President hastened to the hospital and said: "Sickles, I couldn't help coming to see you as soon as I heard of your arrival. I never prayed for anything so fervently in my life as for success for our arms at Gettysburg. As I prayed, a feeling of peace came over me and I rose sure of victory, for I knew that God had answered 'Yes' to me and would be with us on the field. Now I am in a prophetic mood. The doctors say you have one chance in five hundred to recover. I say you will get over this trouble, that you will outlive the war and will be able to serve your country in years to come." He did recover, and he lived to tell this story only a few months ago in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn.

Probably the most intimate friend of Lincoln was Joshua F. Speed, a lady relative of whom gave Lincoln, in his early life, a Bible, and it is said that "he was more familiar with its contents than most clergymen." Whatever of question he may have had about the Sacred Scriptures when he was under the influence of infidel companions and literature, in 1864 he wrote to his old intimate: "I am profitably engaged reading the Bible. Take all of this book you can on reason and the balance upon faith, and you will live and die a better man."

For a time a Captain Mix was in charge of President Lincoln's bodyguard. The Captain was frequently invited to breakfast with the family at their summer residence up at the Soldiers' Home. Said he: "Many times I have listened

to our most eloquent preachers, but *never* with the same feeling of awe and reverence as when our Christian President, his arm around his son, with his deep, earnest tone, each morning read a chapter from the Bible."

In Mr. Lincoln's entire public life, it is said that no testimonial gave him more sincere pleasure than the gift of an elegant and costly copy of the Bible by the colored people of Baltimore in 1864. After the most fitting and touching presentation speech by a negro clergyman, the President thus concludes his reply: "In regard to the 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 in this book. But for that book we could not know right from wrong. All those things desirable to man are contained in it. I return to you my sincere thanks for this very elegant copy of the Great Book of God which you present." It seems pertinent to add here as showing, against Mr. Herndon's representations, Mr. Lincoln's further estimate of the Bible, the testimony of Lucius E. Chittenden, who reports him as saying: "The Bible contains an immense amount of evidence of its own authenticity. . . . I decided long ago that it was less difficult to believe that the Bible was what it claimed to be than to disbelieve it."¹ He seems to have come to an estimate of the Bible quite up to, if not in advance of, some present-day scholars who profess and call themselves Christians.

At the centennial celebration of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, at one of the meetings—Monday evening, November 16, 1903—the late Mr. Justice Harlan, an elder of the church, presiding, said: "No higher praise could have been bestowed upon a statesman of the Revolu-

¹Binns, Abraham Lincoln, p. 346.

tionary period than to say of him that he enjoyed the confidence of the Father of his Country. No higher praise can be bestowed upon a public man of this day than to say of him that he enjoyed the confidence of the Saviour of his Country. But that can be said of one now in high position, and enjoying in a marked degree the respect of the American people. I allude to the distinguished Secretary of State, who was the private secretary of Abraham Lincoln, and who is with us this evening. No one now living was closer to Lincoln than he was, or knew more of his innermost thoughts. When Mr. Lincoln attended religious services here, Mr. Hay often accompanied him and sat by his side. Will Secretary Hay give this audience the pleasure of a few words from him?" The Secretary, sitting in the Lincoln pew, arose in his place and made a brief address, as President Roosevelt had done immediately before him. Among other things he said: "Some of you, I am sure, share with me the memories to which this occasion and place give rise, of the day when I have sat in this church with that illustrious patriot whose fame even now has turned to something remote and legendary. But whatever is remembered or whatever lost, we ought never to forget that Abraham Lincoln, one of the mightiest masters of statecraft that history has ever known, was also one of the most devoted and faithful servants of Almighty God who have ever sat in the high places of the world. . . . He repeated over and over again, in every form of speech, his faith and trust in that Almighty Power who rules the fate of men and nations."¹

There is a statement of religious views by Mr. Lincoln for which the Hon. H. C. Deming, of Connecticut, stands sponsor: "I have never united myself to any church, because

¹New York Avenue Presbyterian Church Memorial Volume, p. 97.

I have found difficulty in giving my assent, without mental reservation, to the long, complicated statements of Christian doctrine which characterize their Articles of Belief and Confessions of Faith. When any church will inscribe over its altar, as its sole qualification for membership, the Savior'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 mind, and thy neighbor as thyself,' that church will I join with all my heart and all my soul." It was probably from this viewpoint that Mrs. Lincoln, herself a member of the Presbyterian Church, said: "He was not a technical Christian." But he was to go beyond this, and a little child leads him.

If ever a man loved children, and his own children, that man was Abraham Lincoln. In February, 1862, occurred the death of his almost idolized and beautiful son Willie—William Wallace Lincoln—just entering upon his twelfth year, and also the nearly fatal illness of Thomas, familiarly called "Tad." The ministrations of the Rev. Dr. Francis Vinton, of Trinity Church, New York, who was spending a few days in Washington, in a great measure met the bereaved father's sore need, and the effect of a sermon which the rector sent him, and of which he had a copy made for his own private use, was such that Mr. Carpenter was able to say, "Through a member of the family, I have been informed that Mr. Lincoln's views in relation to spiritual things seemed changed from that hour." The Christian nurse who served during the sick-siege, herself having been sadly bereaved, led him still farther on.

The way, plainly, was being prepared for this experience and confession: "When I was first inaugurated, I did not love my Saviour. But when God took my son I was greatly

impressed; but still I did not love him; but when I stood on the battle-field of Gettysburg, I gave my heart to Christ and I can now say I do love the Saviour."

Logically and chronologically comes a sequel. A woman connected with the Christian Commission, in the prosecution of her duties, had several interviews with him. Mr. Lincoln, impressed with her Christian devotion and earnestness, on one occasion after she had discharged the object of her visit, said to her: "Mrs. ———, I have formed a high opinion of your Christian character, and now, as we are alone, I have a mind to ask you to give me, in brief, your idea of what constitutes a true religious experience." Her reply was after the evangelical and orthodox fashion. When she had concluded, he was very thoughtful for a few moments, and then very earnestly said: "If what you have told me is a really correct view of this great subject, I can say, with sincerity, that I hope I am a Christian. I had lived until my boy Willie died,¹ without fully realizing these things. That blow overwhelmed me. It showed me my weakness as I had never felt it before, and if I can take what you have stated as a *test*, I think I can safely say *that I know* something of that *change* of which you speak; and I will further add that

¹ W. M. Conrad, an attaché of the Washington Evening Star and a member of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, gives me an item which he says has never been published before. Willie belonged to the Sunday school of that church, and on his deathbed he expressed the wish that the money in his little iron bank should go to the missionary cause. Accordingly, the President handed the money over to Dr. Gurley, the pastor, who, in presenting it, said: "Willie Lincoln wanted the missionaries to have this money, so I have brought it to you as requested. Willie will never come to our meetings again. He has gone to live with God in his beautiful home above. May you all, yes, every one of you, meet him there."

[Since the foregoing was written, the item has appeared in the public prints.—EDITOR.]

it has been my intention for some time, at a suitable opportunity, to make a public religious profession." We may assume, therefore, and believe, that if he had lived he would have made such religious profession. That would have declared him to be what, presumably he already was—a CHRISTIAN.

The Rev. P. D. Gurley, D.D., Lincoln's Washington pastor, between which two men most cordial and close relations existed, pronounced his parishioner "a true believer" and "entirely without guile." And with good reason; for the confession just quoted, made to the woman, the President made, in substance, to Dr. Gurley himself, who took it down in writing. Yet as late as September 11, 1910, a distinguished Southern Presbyterian clergyman, in a sermon in this city said: "Mr. Lincoln was not a professing Christian, but at best a deist or infidel." President Taft, at the unveiling of the Lincoln Statue at Frankfort, Kentucky, November 8, 1911, speaks of his martyred predecessor's "kindly, fatherly patience that has had no counterpart since Bethlehem."

This epitome of Abraham Lincoln's religious-life history is submitted: He was born with a naturally religious temperament, inherited from a godly mother, the impressions made upon her son being early overborne, corrupted,—not crushed,—by the malign influence of unbelieving companions and skeptical literature, but by no means to the extent of justifying the extreme allegations of his confessedly infidel confere associates and historians. To project the errancies of that period over his whole after life as his law-partner biographers have done, and say that "he lived and died a deep-grounded infidel," is wrong,—not simply a mistake, but a colossal untruth, the utterance of which, or of accordant im-

plications, should forever cease. His godly heritage persisted and wrought secretly, unknown to his unsympathizing intimates, yet manifesting itself now and then, as in the Chiniquy, Bateman, and other incidents, and coming at length to fruition-consummation. From the time he left Springfield, on through the Presidential period—mid civil fratricidal strife, mid political contention, mid an agonizing of soul because of being chiefest bearer of the responsibility of preserving a nation's existence, mid heart-crushing domestic sorrow, mid an almost "dying daily"—logically and chronologically there was a progressive development, now traced, of spiritual perception and experience, until he came to acknowledge a regenerative "change" and a readiness to make a public religious profession, which would involve, according to his own words, a heart-surrender to and love for Jesus Christ as Saviour.

If the foregoing narration of Abraham Lincoln's religious opinions and life be according to fact, who is a Christian if he was not one?