Abraham Lincoln and Christianity.

White, Kermit Escus, 1918-
Boston University

http://hdl.handle.net/2144/8748
Boston University
Dissertation

ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND CHRISTIANITY

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

1954
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INTRODUCTION

1. Statement of the problem. The purpose of this research was (1) to study the relationship of Abraham Lincoln to Christianity; (2) to investigate the social, economic, political, and religious factors which influenced his life; (3) to examine his reaction and response to the environmental influences; and (4) to evaluate the religious aspects of his life.

2. Importance of the study. Lincoln was neither a theologian nor a philosopher; yet the impact of his life upon humanity is significant. The relevance of this dissertation to church history, theology, and philosophy involves a consideration of Lincoln's concepts concerning God, man, and human destiny. It should be of considerable interest to organized Christianity to discover the nature of his views concerning the church.

One of the important tasks of this investigation will be to account for the recognized greatness of Lincoln. Interest in Lincoln has been, and continues to be, a matter of national and international concern. The uniqueness of this interest is evidenced by the voluminous amount of material that has appeared since his death. The vital significance of his life stimulates and challenges the interest of people everywhere. The observation of Benjamin P. Thomas is an important evaluation:

Extreme eulogists of Lincoln sometimes go so far as to compare their hero with Jesus Christ; and while some realists may scoff, there is a valid comparison, in one respect at least, and it goes far to explain why books continue to be written about Lincoln and why they will continue to be written. For both Christ and Lincoln symbolize great vibrant, living forces--the one Christianity, the other Democracy--and so long as these forces remain vital there will
be no cessation of interest in either man.¹

This research does not assume that Lincoln ranks second to Jesus in importance; however, since Lincoln does elicit an universal interest, a study of his relationship with Jesus may well deserve serious attention. If it is granted that Christianity and democracy are related, the same analogy may be applied to Jesus and Lincoln. Christianity, democracy, and the Lincoln story are inseparably joined in importance.

A study of the relationship of Lincoln to Christianity is important because American church history should account for his unique greatness. American church historians and Lincoln biographers have not adequately confronted the issue. Lincoln was not a church member. How will church history resolve this fact?

If church history will stand the test of being comprehensive, it should consider not only the lives of great churchmen, but the lives of great men outside the church. St. Augustine and Martin Luther were consecrated members of the church; however, it would be impossible to prove that Lincoln excelled less than these great churchmen in the qualities that count for human greatness. To an extent the greatness of Augustine and Luther may be accounted for because they were churchmen; however, the problem is how will church history account for the greatness of Lincoln.

Men who leave a mark of good influence on humanity are always important to the study of history. The truth of this fact is evident because history cannot be fully understood apart from the significant lives of the people who make history. In this sense the merit of

¹ Thomas, PP, p. 309.
Lincoln's contribution to history will stand alone as sufficient evidence of his worth to humanity.

In American church history the name of Abraham Lincoln is rarely mentioned. When his name does appear it is usually in connection with the slavery issue, or with some other aspect of the Civil War. Slight references of this nature do not take serious cognizance of the man himself. Lincoln biographers have attempted to analyze his religious qualities; yet their allegations have been inconclusive. The following statement of Edwin P. Booth, professor of historical theology at Boston University School of Theology, presents a challenge to ministers, religious educators and laymen:

It should give all serious-minded men cause for considerable thought to contemplate that Abraham Lincoln refused to be a member of the Christian church.¹

In Lincoln the Christian world has a witness of an individual who did not profess a personal allegiance to the Christian church. He lived in the midst of an organized Christian community; yet he was not a professed member of that community. The fact of his refusal to join a denominational branch of Christianity presents, as Booth points out, a disturbing problem that must be confronted.

During the history of the Christian church a great many persons have refused to identify themselves with institutional Christianity. Perhaps a study at random concerning the motives of an individual's rejection of the church would not warrant a dissertation; yet a critical investigation of the Lincoln story is merited because of the stature

¹ Booth, EEF, p. 11. It was in Booth's Seminar on Lincoln (1949) that this dissertation first took root in the mind of the investigator.
of the man. Ministers cannot dismiss the issue because they are confronted constantly with the analogous example of highly respected individuals who also refuse to identify themselves with the church. It should be noted that Christianity itself is not necessarily invalidated by Lincoln's position; nevertheless, the church should consider the motives of Lincoln in his rejection of church membership.

The problem of Lincoln's refusal to become a church member cannot be resolved by an assumption that he emulated, at least, the virtues of the church. In many respects, as the evidence will show, he was more virtuous than the church. Furthermore, the ethical aspects of his faith were not in accordance with the practice of church doctrine and ethics. Evidence will substantiate the thesis that Lincoln was a non-Christian relative to the prevailing orthodoxy of his time.

Denominations have sought to justify their right to claim the allegiance of Lincoln's faith by comparing certain similarities in his alleged religious beliefs to their own respective religious concepts. These denominational claims prove one fact; namely, that the churches recognized the ethical character of Lincoln. It is important to consider if these attempts to claim Lincoln as an orthodox Christian indicated that the churches could not admit the possibility of an individual to achieve a Christ-like stature apart from organized Christianity. The question is vital as to whether or not an individual can achieve Christian character apart from a personal identification with the church.

The church is always confronted with the problem of observing religious and ethical qualities among people who are not members of the church. Churchmen usually answer by affirming dogmatically that these
religious qualities are due to the influence of the Christian church. An investigation of this problem will reveal Lincoln did not depend upon the church to teach him the value of ethics. There were factors at work in his environment which did not stem from the influence of the church. The importance of this research will be to consider the environmental influences of the frontier life which were particularly evident in the character of Lincoln.

This research will examine and evaluate the relationship of Lincoln to Christianity. The thesis will be substantiated with reasonable evidence that the Christian aspects of Lincoln's religious and ethical character were not dependent, primarily, upon the influences of organized Christianity in the nineteenth century.
3. Scope of the dissertation. A study of the life of an individual as it is related to Christianity is a task of considerable magnitude. This research is not a biographical study of Lincoln; yet the experiences of his life, as they relate to Christianity, will be treated. In addition, the personal and non-personal realities will be studied. The personal realities of human experience are self-evident; non-personal realities include the entire physical environment of an individual. Life cannot be understood apart from physical environment. It is important to recognize the influences of the mountains, rivers, forests, and plains which formed the natural setting of Lincoln's life. The impressions received from the elemental forces of life cannot be discounted in the understanding of the Lincoln story. Lincoln was born close to nature and the mark of nature's influence was upon him. In order to understand the character of Lincoln it will be necessary to trace the development of his life in relation to the whole of his experiences.

Since it is impossible to treat the entire range of his experiences with complete objectivity, consideration is given to those areas of his life which can be readily discerned. There are definite facts about his life which are well known; yet the matter of his religious faith has always been an open question. In order to arrive at a more complete understanding of the religious nature of his life the religious background of the nineteenth century must be examined.

The scope of the dissertation is limited. An extensive study of American church history is not the plan of the research. However, a survey of the organized forces of Christianity in America is important.
An examination of the denominational organizations on the frontier is essential to an understanding of frontier church life. A critical exposition of the theological and ethical characteristics of the churches is of equal importance.

The question of church influence on the frontier will be examined. Specifically, the immediate churches of Lincoln's environment will be studied to determine if the churches were a hinderance or a help to the faith of Lincoln.

Every aspect which is considered relevant to the research will be included within the purview of the study. The scope of the investigation will, therefore, include a presentation of the religious and social factors in the life of Lincoln. Finally, his religious faith will provide the crux of the study under investigation.

4. **Review of literature in the field.** The amount of literature written about Lincoln is surprisingly large. In the *Lincoln Bibliography, 1839-1939* (2 vols., 1945), compiled by Jay Monaghan, 3,958 books and pamphlets are listed. Since 1939 the amount of Lincoln literature has increased as each decade brings forth additional literature.

Two Lincoln scholars, Paul M. Angle and Benjamin P. Thomas, have attempted to "winnow the permanent from the inconsequential" in the Lincoln literature.¹ According to the standards of historical scholarship, these Lincoln writers have evaluated the literature and have selected the books which are generally recognized as being standard works.

Paul M. Angle's *A Shelf of Lincoln Books* (1946), lists eighty-one

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¹ Angle, SLB, p. ix.
books; Benjamin P. Thomas's *Portrait for Posterity* (1947), contains a critical estimate of fifteen Lincoln authors. Out of the thousands of books and pamphlets written about Lincoln, only a dozen writers in the field have achieved national and international importance. Names familiar to Lincoln students among the outstanding authors are: Holland, Lamon, Herndon, Nicolay, Hay, Weik, Tarbell, Barton, Beveridge, Randall, Sandburg, Angle, and Warren. ¹

Almost every phase of Lincoln's life has been treated; including the nature of his religious faith. A portrait of Lincoln is gradually emerging. ² However, the matter of his religious faith is still an undecided issue. Almost all of the standard biographies have touched upon the characteristics of his faith; yet the subject has not been adequately resolved. The literature that appeared subsequent to his death in 1865 has depicted his faith as orthodox and unorthodox; and the literary controversy has continued into the twentieth-century. During the early writings on this subject a negligible amount of attention was given to Lincoln's own statements and writings concerning religion. Generally, the authors were content to voice their own personal opinions without weighing the evidence. Although a few writers of the later period have attempted to examine Lincoln's faith with critical judgment, their efforts have been inconclusive.

From the standpoint of literature, the controversy over Lincoln's religious faith began with Josiah G. Holland's biography, *The Life of*

¹ See bibliography.
Abraham Lincoln (1866); and his inclusion of the Bateman incident indicated that he was chiefly concerned in portraying Lincoln as an orthodox Christian.\(^1\) William H. Herndon, Lincoln's law partner, immediately took offense at Holland's implication that Lincoln, though not a church member, was inherently orthodox in his religious faith. Herndon could not believe that Lincoln was, in any respect, an orthodox Christian. In speeches, letters, and later in a book (written from Herndon's sources), by Herndon and Jesse W. Weik, Life of Lincoln (latest edition, 1930), he opposed the idea that Lincoln's faith was similar to the contemporary faith of church members.\(^2\)

The issue became intensified when Ward H. Lamon's The Life of Abraham Lincoln (1872), was published.\(^3\) The sources underlying this book belonged to the Lincoln collection of Herndon and, in general, the opinions of Herndon were upheld. People throughout the nation sided in the majority with the position of Holland. The Lincoln story was only beginning and the myth-making theories were in accordance with the desire of the people to make Lincoln a national hero in every phase of his life. Herndon opposed this trend on the basis that the tendency to glorify Lincoln would de-humanize him; and consequently, destroy his human qualities—which, if left to stand in their own right, would merit his true greatness.

At the turn of the twentieth-century the religious controversy had subsided. The great literary effort of John G. Nicolay and John

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1 See Appendix, p. 142.
2 Ibid., p. 360.
3 Chauncey F. Black was the true author, or ghost-writer, of the book. Black was the son of President Buchanan's Attorney General and a friend of Lamon. He was also a Democrat.
Hay, Abraham Lincoln: A History (10 vols., 1890), was definitive for its time. Although the subject of Lincoln's religion was not dealt with specifically by Nicolay and Hay, yet they were partisan to Lincoln and did not write anything that was derogative to him. The primary sources of their work were owned by Lincoln's son, Robert Todd Lincoln, and no attempt was made to offend him by including material of a questionable nature.¹

Nicolay's comment to Herndon in a letter dated May 27, 1865, was used by Herndon to strengthen his argument that Lincoln's religion did not change after he left Springfield:

Mr. Lincoln did not, to my knowledge, change in any way his religious views, beliefs, or opinions from the time he left Springfield to the day of his death. I do not know just what they were, never having heard him explain them in detail; but I am very sure he gave no outward indication of his mind having undergone any change in that regard while here.²

The validity of Herndon's position relative to this question will be discussed in the insuing research. The inclusion of Nicolay's statement illustrates the apparent lack of interest Nicolay and Hay had in the religion of Lincoln; otherwise, they would have noted a deepening of Lincoln's faith during the war years.

Writers of the twentieth-century, such as, Tarbell, Beveridge, Sandburg, Randall, Angle, and Warren, have made no attempt to side either with Holland or with Herndon. They have taken an objective approach to the issue of Lincoln's religion by portraying his faith as a natural corollary of his human greatness. Many of these authors, particularly Randall, have chosen other areas of Lincoln's life as a basis for their

¹ The Robert Todd Lincoln collection was not made public until 1947.
² Barton, SAL, p. 91.
writing; and as a result, a thorough investigation of the subject has been lacking.

Two Lincoln authors are representative of a modern effort to deal with his religion. William J. Johnson's *Abraham Lincoln the Christian* (1913), is an attempt to account for "one of the world's greatest characters" by a "careful study of his life, writings, and speeches, to find what Lincoln had said that would reveal his own mind and heart."\(^1\) Johnson's book is documented with a few excerpts from the writings of Lincoln; but they are selective and relate only to the favorable attitudes of Lincoln toward the Christian church. Moreover, his book includes unfounded statements and incidents as factual information. His conclusion follows the traditional pattern, in that, Lincoln was a genuine Christian in the accepted sense. He also infers that Lincoln made a mistake in not joining the church.

The second modern author to deal specifically with the issue of Lincoln's faith was William E. Barton. Barton's *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln* (1920), is the best book that has appeared on the subject. Angle writes that "in fullness and authority, however, *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln* still stands by itself."\(^2\) Thomas views the book as "the standard work."\(^3\) Thomas also quotes the Boston Transcript: that its critic, after reading the last page, had "no clearer idea of Lincoln's religious belief than in its first. Despite the mass of material he assembles, Dr. Barton proves nothing."\(^4\)

\(^1\) Johnson, ALC, p. 8.
\(^2\) Angle, SLB, p. 113.
\(^3\) Thomas, op. cit., p. 216.
\(^4\) Loc. cit.
Barton's book is the only critical study of the religion of Lincoln that has been written; however, it is not a definitive treatment of the subject. His examination of the sources is not one-sided; for instance, he does not select passages of Lincoln's writings which are exclusively favorable to the church. He weighs the pro and con of the evidences that relate to Lincoln's faith. However, the book gives the impression that Barton was not in favor of the example of the non-church membership set by Lincoln. An indication of this attitude of Barton is implied in his discussion of Lincoln's reasons for not joining the church. Barton states:

"I think that he did not join because he was still in some measure of intellectual uncertainty with reference to doctrinal matters. I am sorry that someone did not tell him that these were no sufficient reasons for his declining to unite with the church."¹

It would have been difficult for Lincoln to have found a minister who possessed a similar view toward church doctrine as Barton held. The Universalists were organized in 1770 and the Unitarians in 1785; yet regardless of the increase of these liberal denominations, Lincoln did not seek to identify himself with either church. It may be that Barton overlooked a significant aspect of Lincoln's nature; namely, that Lincoln did not believe that church membership was necessary to life.

Since Barton's book on the religion of Lincoln there has been a decline in the publication of major books dealing with the subject. Thus after more than thirty years, during which other important aspects of Lincoln's life have occupied the interest of scholars, the subject has become a problem for investigation by this dissertation.

¹ Barton, op. cit., p. 258.
Examination of "Doctoral Dissertations Accepted by American Universities" (H. W. Wilson Company and the Library of Congress), and "A List of American Doctoral Dissertations" at Boston University School of Theology reveals that no dissertations have been written on the subject of Lincoln's religion. The problem, therefore, that confronts this dissertation is an open field for inquiry.

5. Sources and methods of research. The sources selected for this research are secondary and primary. For the purpose of making a survey of the religious and social environment of Lincoln standard secondary sources have been relied upon. Important primary sources quoted in the standard works have been selected, for example, to illustrate frontier conditions and the various confessions of faith accepted by the churches. Historians who have been outstanding in their contribution to American history have been relied upon for their evaluation of the historical processes in America. Independent judgment has been the rule of the investigation relative to the opinions of the historians; and wherever possible, the various opinions have been checked against the sources.

The primary sources which provide the basis of the research consist of the latest and most definitive collections of Lincoln's own writings. This collection, The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, edited by Roy P. Basler, was published in 1953 under the auspices of The Abraham Lincoln Association in Springfield, Illinois. All antecedent works of this nature have been replaced by the new Basler edition.

The method of the research is basically historical. The biographical method only occurs in connection with those characteristics and experiences of Lincoln as they relate to his religious faith. From the
viewpoint of historical research, the method of description is used. The religious and social environment of Lincoln is described in order to depict the conditions of frontier life. In addition to historical description, interpretation is important to the study. Thus the descriptive and interpretative techniques are employed as basic to an understanding of Lincoln.

The event of his experiences and the interpretation of those experiences are two aspects of the same problem—the problem of attempting to understand what Lincoln understood regarding religious matters. In the case of considering the collected works of Lincoln the method used was to search the entirety of his writings for statements relating to his religious views. Also a necessary precaution has been recognized in the use of these resources; that is, every statement is considered within its context. No attempt has been made to give a sentence undue meaning by lifting it out of the context. Moreover, factors of time, place, and circumstance are considered in relation to the purpose of each individual document.

The historical method of research is the only approach that can establish the true factors of Lincoln's religious background. Moreover, an interpretation of his religious experiences, if it is to set forth the true nature of his religious faith, must be historically sound.

In reality, the true nature of Lincoln's religion is known only to God; however, this dissertation offers for acceptance a reasonable approximation of the truth regarding his religion.
CHAPTER I

A SURVEY OF THE FRONTIER CHURCH

The primary purpose of this chapter is to present a survey of the religious and social factors of Lincoln's environment. The research is not an extensive study of American church history. However, in order to understand the relationship of Lincoln to Christianity a historical survey of the American churches should be presented.

The German language has a term that expresses the underlying idea of this chapter—Zeitgeist—"the spirit of the age." In a study of Lincoln the term Zeitgeist may be applied to the whole of human experience in America when he was born. The spirit of the age in which Lincoln lived was rooted in the past. Churches reflected in their confessions of faith the traditional doctrines inherited from Europe and these religious concepts had been transmitted through the decades of American history to the time of Lincoln. All of the prevailing religious, social, economic, and political ideas were integral aspects of American civilization—Zeitgeist of America.

A. RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF FRONTIER PROTESTANTISM

The Christian church was firmly established in America when Lincoln was born in 1809. The extent of church influence was felt throughout the whole of American life. In a broad sense America was considered a Christian nation even though the majority of the population was not identified with the church. The Christian settlement of America was merely the extension of European Christianity.
Nothing remains static in human experience and the American churches were no exception. Christianity was transplanted from Europe to the shores of a new continent; and it is significant to note that the new American environment effected a change among the churches. The form and content of organized Christianity in America began to lose the European characteristics. On the frontier settlements in America the individual approach to Christian experience found new opportunities for expression. The religious unrest of Europe was the beginning of religious freedom. While religious freedom was not the sole motive in the colonization of America, it was a dominant factor for the oppressed church members who fled Europe in search of a new way of life. Furthermore, it was the religious element among the Pilgrims that assumed immediate civic responsibility during the Plymouth settlement in Massachusetts.¹

In colonial America the rise of individual conscience was attended by an emphasis upon a personal religious experience. Individual conscience, however, was not treated with religious tolerance among the colonies.² The similarity between Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms and the heresy trials of New England is significant of Puritan intolerance. In casting off the religious restraints imposed by the established churches of Europe the colonial churches imposed similar restraints upon the religious dissenters who rejected religious conformity. Emphasis upon personal religious experience, however, was the factor that soon undermined the hold of religious conformity.

¹ John Carver, William Bradford, and William Brewster were church men. ² The banishment of Roger Williams from Massachusetts in 1635 is an example of religious intolerance.
The influence of the American frontier is especially important in understanding American Protestantism. At successive stages there was a frontier in America from the Jamestown and Plymouth settlements until late in the nineteenth century. The colonies of Virginia and Massachusetts were frontier outposts of English emigration. Survival was the basic consideration of the early emigrants. The early settlements survived only by the sheer physical and mental perseverance of the people. These people learned through the adversity of human experience in the New World the meaning of self-reliance. In the ensuing history of America this spirit of individualism was to play an important role in the development of organized Christianity.

A strong bulwark against the dangers of the frontier settlements was provided by the religious faith of the Mayflower passengers. Before the small band of emigrants disembarked the compact they formulated aboard ship denoted their religious faith. The first words of the document, "In ye name of God," were to set the course for a new trust in God. Under the administration of President Lincoln this same dependency upon God found expression on the national coins—"In God we trust."

William Bradford, second governor of the Plymouth Plantation, expressed the religious faith of the Pilgrims in Divine Providence in the following statement:

Being thus arrived in a good harbor and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees & blessed ye God of heaven, who had brought them over ye vast & furious ocean, and delivered them from all ye periles & miseries therof, againe to set their feete on ye firme and stable earth, their proper elemente.2

1 The aid of Indians like Massasoit was necessary to their survival.
2 Bradford, HPP, p. 94.
The settlement of Plymouth in 1620 by the Separatists marked the establishment of Congregationalism in America. The English Separatists had dissented from all control of the established church prior to their settlement in America. In an attempt to escape the persecutions of civil and ecclesiastical authority the Separatists, under the influence of John Smith, found a refuge in America.¹ The Congregationalists believed in the complete separation of the church from state and ecclesiastical control.

The Puritans settled at Salem in the 1630's under the auspices of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The difficulty that this group had faced in England was chiefly through their desire to purify the English church from all Roman Catholic influences. Confronted by the oppression of Charles I and Archbishop Laud, they emigrated to America. It should be noted that the Puritans had not sought to break away from the established church; they merely sought to reform the church.

In the Virginia settlement the Church of England was transplanted without the antecedent religious circumstances which characterized the Massachusetts settlement. The church merely followed the English settlers as it had always done in the system of English colonization.

1. Theological background. In general, American Protestantism was theologically united during the early colonial period. The Puritans did not seriously oppose the theology of the established church in England. They accepted the Thirty-nine Articles that had been adopted in 1563. The chief objection they raised was against the sacramental and disciplinary practices of the church. Such practices as kneeling during the Lord's

¹ John Smith, founder of the first English Congregation (1606); not the John Smith of Virginia.
Supper, the use of the ring in marriage, clerical dress, and the sign of the cross were particularly offensive to the Puritans.

The Separatists' main objection to the established church concerned the matter of polity rather than theology. They rebelled against being coerced into conformity with the established church. Instead of agreeing with the polity and discipline of the English church they advocated the concept of the church as an autonomous local body; and they insisted that a voluntary spirit should govern the terms of membership. In theory, they held that no church should have power to direct the affairs of any other church. The merger of the Separatists and the Puritans in New England resulted in the formation of churches of the Congregational pattern.

According to the cardinal Calvinistic principles of civic responsibility, the New England churches became the dominant ruling power. The New England Christian commonwealth was similar to Calvin's Geneva experiment. If the Puritans and Separatists had resented the ecclesiastical authority of England, they soon forgot the lessons they should have learned. Instead of practicing the tolerance they had expected from the established church of England, in America they practiced the same intolerance exhibited by the established church. As Walker points out the New England theocracy was in existence as late as 1834 in Massachusetts. ¹

From the very beginning of the colonial period religious dissent existed. The Baptists and Quakers were the American counterpart of the Puritans and Separatists in England. After the banishment of Roger

¹ Walker, HEC, p. 567.
Williams and Anne Hutchinson the New England theocracy, supported by civil law, hanged four Quakers in Boston in 1656. Freedom of Protestant worship was not granted in Massachusetts until 1691.

Since human life was considered under the rule of Providence, the Congregationalists of New England were impelled to decree correct doctrine and to enforce strict morality among the people. Eligibility to hold public office depended upon church membership. This fact strengthened the efforts of the church to maintain religious conformity.

The prevailing theology of the colonial period was Calvinism. Salvation under the Calvinistic system was a matter of election, adherence to correct doctrine, and observance of the sacraments. As Latourette points out the Westminster Confession was the basis of theology for the New England churches.\(^1\) The Westminster Confession was, as Walker states, an exposition of Calvinism.\(^2\) The Savoy Declaration, adopted in 1658 by Congregationalism, was essentially Calvinistic. In the Westminster Confession an infralapsarian effort was made to explain sin as a condition of man's disobedience to God; thus providing an area for man's responsibility. It was according to Walker, "an attempt to give a definite explanation of sin as man's own act, and to show a real human responsibility for his ruin."\(^3\) Freedom of the will was not granted; and the doctrines of unconditional election, limited atonement, total depravity, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints were retained. Strict adherence to these doctrines was demanded by the church.

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1 Latourette, HC, p. 954.
2 Walker, op. cit., p. 472.
3 Loc. cit.
One of the significant aspects of the colonial churches was the powerful influence they exerted throughout the colonies. During the entire colonial period the churches were a minority as far as membership was concerned. Only approximately five out of a hundred people professed church membership by 1750.¹

In relating this fact to theology it is apparent that the theological emphasis upon salvation did not greatly impress the people. It is reasonable to assume that most of the people were aware of the church doctrines concerning sin and salvation; yet the majority made no effort to join the church. According to the doctrinal standards of the church these people belong to the general class of the "unsaved."

A partial explanation of the lack of interest in the church was due to the mixed motives in the settlement of America. Many of the colonial settlers came from the lower social and economic classes of Europe. After migrating to the colonies they observed that the churches were closely identified with the upper economic classes; thus they were resentful and apprehensive of the churches. In a modified form the colonial churches did follow the Old World system of favoring the higher social and economic classes.

In another sense the majority of the people were too busy in making a living to be concerned with the church. Also, it is reasonable to assume that many of them were beginning to doubt the harsh doctrines of Calvinism. Moreover, the frontier conditions were engendering a sense of individual responsibility which meant that the church had to prove that it had something to offer to the people.

¹ Latourette, loc. cit.
The colonies had a variety of Protestantism in the denominational branches established prior to the Revolutionary War. Episcopalism first appeared in America at James River in 1607 when Robert Hunt celebrated the Lord's Supper for the English settlers. The Church of England was established formally in Virginia by the legislature in 1619. Jonas Michaelius founded the Dutch Reformed Church in New York in 1628. The Lutherans, under John Companius, established themselves in Delaware in 1646. In 1683 Francis Pastorius organized the German Reformed at Germantown, Pennsylvania. The Mennonites also settled at Germantown in 1683. In 1705 the Presbyterians organized in Pennsylvania under Francis Makemie. The Roman Catholics were in Maryland by 1634. Rhode Island received the Baptists under the leadership of Roger Williams and John Clarke in 1639. The Jews first appeared in New York City in 1730. The first Methodist Episcopal group was organized by Robert Strawbridge in Maryland in 1764; later by Philip Embury in New York in 1768. John Murray established the Universalists in New Jersey; later in Massachusetts.

Approximately eighteen different Protestant churches had been established in the colonies previous to the Revolution. Each denomination sincerely believed that it represented the true church of Jesus Christ and felt divinely inspired to perpetuate its particular theology. It was a time of consolidation and since the churches were of European origin, each church sought to maintain its particular religious esprit de corps. The racial and nationalistic factors were important in keeping each church an exclusive unit. The Germans tended to band together as either Lutheran or Reformed groups. The Scotch and Scotch-Irish remained together as Presbyterians; the English people were Congregationalists, Episcopalians,
Methodists, and Baptists.

The very existence of these different Christian denominations exemplified the principle of diversity in theological concepts. However, it should be noted that theological differences alone did not constitute the denominational variety. Churches were divided over the issues of the sacraments, polity, and discipline. The Presbyterians and Congregationalists were united in their acceptance of Calvinistic theology; yet they differed relative to slight forms of church government. The Baptists, while adhering to Calvinism in general, separated themselves concerning the mode of baptism. They also objected to the doctrine of infant baptism. Matters of church polity and sacramental usage, rather than theology, kept the Episcopalians a distinct group. It is true that the Roman Catholic characteristics of the Episcopal Church were opposed by the other denominations; nevertheless, the theology of the Episcopalians was not seriously questioned.

The theological background of the churches during the period prior to the Great Awakening was essentially European, or Calvinistic. It was a period for consolidation among the churches and there was not sufficient time for the development of a distinctive colonial theology. Conditions were fermenting relative to theology; yet a hundred years passed before the New England theology took form in a distinctive way under the stimulus of the religious awakening. During this time, however, the social, economic, and political factors of the frontier environment were playing an important role toward awakening the people to new ideas about religion.
2. Religious awakening. Prior to the Great Awakening church membership was on the decline in the colonies. The number of people who were non-church members exceeded that of any European country.\(^1\) As Rowe points out, the New World approach to church membership was based on the principle of voluntarism.\(^2\) The Old World system of state churches in which individuals were born into the church was not transmitted to the colonies. Instead of being baptized into a state church, as in the case of the European churches, American church membership became a matter of individual experience and choice. Thus the absence of a state church in the colonies was a primary factor relative to the problem of church membership. Walker's statement is significant at this point:

Religion in America during the period till the second quarter of the eighteenth century was essentially the propagation of European bodies. Save in New England, it was relatively feeble, and there had suffered a serious decline of its original enthusiasm. No one religious body was dominant in the colonies as a whole. While particular denominations were entrenched in particular colonies, no church could become that of all the colonies. The way was thus made ready for that religious freedom which was to become the characteristic of the United States as a nation.\(^3\)

With the impossibility of any one of the colonial churches becoming a dominant church, due to the number of denominations and the spirit of frontier individualism, American Christianity was forced to rely on the voluntary principle of free choice in church membership. Rowe's analysis of the prevailing voluntarism is valid:

Voluntarism proved a stimulus to church activity. It is a healthy principle that a church must exert itself in order to live, and endowments and establishments frequently cut the nerve of generosity.

1 Neve, HET, II, p. 260.
2 Rowe, HRUS, p. 52.
3 Walker, op. cit., p. 570.
Voluntarism was a principle in harmony with the sturdy, self-reliant character of colonists inured to hardship and depending on their own resources. It was in accord with the genius of America, and no other principle could have endured in the American churches.¹

Prior to the frontier religious revivals, however, the majority of the people did not evidence a voluntary willingness to identify themselves with the church. The result of this situation motivated the denominations to seek new methods to recruit church membership. Religious experience became the criterion for membership.

One exception to the rule of a personal religious experience was the Half-Way Covenant of 1662. This was an expedient measure occasioned by the problem the third generation presented. Previously, membership had been recognized by the first and second generations on the basis of individual Christian testimony. After the third generation appeared many parents were faced with the prospect of not being eligible to present their children for Christian baptism. These parents had been baptized as children of the original colonists; yet when they desired to have their children baptized, the church refused. A controversial compromise was achieved by the Half-Way Covenant. Children of the parents in question were granted baptism on the condition that the parents in question would publically covenant their willingness to attend and support the church, even though communion benefits and the right to vote in church affairs were denied them.

During the controversy that arose over the Half-Way Covenant some of the churches permitted all baptized persons, regardless of their half-way membership, to receive communion. This action was considered by some as lowering the former high standards of the church.

¹ Rowe, loc. cit.
Other efforts were made to strengthen the colonial churches. Thomas Bray (1656-1730) was instrumental in the organization of the "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge" in 1699. In 1701 he organized the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts." The former organization aided in the establishment of libraries and the circulation of religious literature; the latter was responsible for stimulating missionary interest among the colonies.

It is significant to note that the clergymen who became active in the Great Awakening were Calvinists. These men were especially concerned about the salvation of the non-church people; and it is at this point that the Calvinistic doctrine of unconditional election began to be questioned. The strict theories of election and irresistible grace were disturbing to the revivalistic preacher who sought to reach the unchurched population. The idea that preaching had nothing to do with changing the status of an individual's soul received new consideration.

As Latourette maintains, the Great Awakening had its chief appeal among the churches of the Calvinist tradition. On the surface there appeared an apparent contradiction between Calvinist theory and the revivalistic interest of the churches. If the church could not help bring about the salvation of an individual's soul according to theory, at least in practice, some of the churches approved of the techniques of revivalism. They acted on the assumption that these methods, while not considered as works of grace, were practical in getting the individual to confess his sins and accept God's saving grace. Thus in addition to Calvin's view of adherence to correct doctrine and living a worthy life, the experience of

1 Latourette, op. cit., p. 958.
individual salvation was essential.

The spontaneous religious awakening began in New Jersey under the preaching of Jacobus Frelinghuysen (1691-1747), a Dutch Reformed minister. Frelinghuysen, aware of the external froms of the church, began to preach in the 1720's on the need for a transforming spiritual experience. He gained the support of Gilbert Tennent (1703-1764), son of William Tennent the founder of the "log college" experiment in ministerial training. The success of the revivals in New Jersey spread and New England, under the leadership of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), became the center of the Great Awakening.

Edwards, pastor of the Congregational Church in Northampton, Massachusetts, became the moving force in the ensuing awakening of religious interest. He was deeply concerned with the decline of interest in the church during the first quarter of the eighteenth century; and, stimulated by the alleged danger of Arminianism, he began a series of sermons in 1734 on justification by faith alone. The main emphasis of his concern was to demonstrate that salvation was the gift of God and not dependent on good works. According to Edwards' view, Arminianism tended toward Roman Catholicism in practice because it advocated a degree of human responsibility in the matter of salvation. It is a debatable question as to how far Arminius (1560-1609), departed from Calvin's views; however, the ecclesiastical defeat of Arminius' views at the Synod of Dort in 1619 did not destroy the trend away from Calvinism. Briefly, the Arminians opposed unconditional election by advocating that election and reprobation were conditioned by man's belief or unbelief. This was heresy to Edwards' view of unconditional election.
Throughout the subsequent theological controversy the doctrines of Calvinism were questioned. Arguments were waged as to whether or not Christ died for the sins of the predestined elect or for the whole of the human race. Relative to irresistible grace the question of man's free will was debated. The Arminians held that man could accept or reject grace; thus the emphasis on man's responsibility tended toward a new concept of freedom—the freedom of alternate choice. The Arminians, however, still retained the Calvinist position that man was unable, due to his depraved condition, to come to God unless motivated by the Holy Spirit. Concerning the doctrine of perseverance the Arminians were uncertain as to whether or not Christians would be assured of final salvation irrespective of sins committed while in a state of grace. The Methodists, Arminian in certain respects, held that a Christian could fall from grace and be lost.

Concerning the movement of the new revivalism that spread among the colonies, the awakening religious interest was contagious. The Dutch Reformed, Presbyterians, Mennonites, Dunkers, and Schwenkfelders carried the movement in the middle colonies; the Baptists and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians in the middle and southern colonies. The Methodists were not sufficiently organized to join in the Great Awakening; however, they were successful in revivalism during the latter half of the century and at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Great Awakening gained its greatest success in New England.

The New England phase of the awakening reached its zenith from 1740 to 1742 under Edwards and George Whitefield (1714-1770). Whitefield was an uncompromising Calvinist; yet he advocated a personal religious experience as the primary basis of salvation.
Edward's sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," delivered at Enfield, Connecticut, 1741, emphasized the relation of sin to God's judgment. The sermon so stirred the people that due to "such a breathing of distress, and weeping," he requested silence "that he might be heard."\(^1\)

The physical demonstrations of falling, jerkings of the body, and other hysterical manifestations, often attended the personal experience of conversion. William James makes the following observation relative to the instantaneous aspect of religious conversion:

There is too much evidence of this for any doubt of it to be possible. Theology, combining this fact with the doctrines of election and grace, has concluded that the spirit of God is with us at these dramatic moments in a peculiarly miraculous way, unlike what happens at any other juncture of our lives. At this moment it believes, an absolutely new nature is breathed into us, and we become partakers of the very substance of the Deity.\(^2\)

James accepted the reality of the experiences, but not the theological basis. He advocated the variety of types in religious experience; moreover, his analysis of the theological basis for conversion was the prevailing view of the exponents of revivalism.

The Great Awakening, although supported by the majority of the colonial churches, was also opposed by men like Charles Chauncy (1705-1787), and Jonathan Mayhew (1720-1766). These men objected to the excesses of revival emotionalism. They also tended toward Arminianism and were instrumental in paving the way toward Unitarianism.\(^3\)

The effect of the Great Awakening was divisive. Two religious factions resulted: the "New Lights" and the "Old Lights." The former advocated revivalism; the latter opposed it. Recriminatory charges were

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1 Sweet, SRA, p. 193.
2 James, VRE, p. 222.
3 Walker, op. cit., p. 572.
made by both factions to the extent that Christian fellowship among the churches was almost destroyed. As Latourette points out, the bitterness was so great that some of the churches split into distinct units.\(^1\) The strife was probably one of the reasons why interest in the revivals soon diminished. In fact, within nine years after the revival broke at Northampton, no applications for church membership were requested by Edwards' church between 1744 to 1748.\(^2\) Even Whitefield, popular preacher that he was, encountered opposition on his second tour of New England in 1744. By 1750, revivalism in New England was practically a dead issue.

Edwards' contribution to American Christianity during this period is significant. Walker states that Edwards was "the keenest philosophical intellect that colonial America produced."\(^3\) The literary works of this famous preacher included twenty-seven published while he was living and nine after his death.

In his *Freedom of the Will* (1754), he maintained that man's will is natural and moral. He granted that man had the natural ability to direct his actions; however, man could not achieve salvation through his natural will. The inclination to turn to God for salvation was a matter of the Holy Spirit motivating man's moral ability. Salvation depended upon God's gift of grace to transform man's depraved natural will into a moral will before he would be inclined to do the things pleasing to God. Thus Edwards drew a distinction between the natural and moral ability of man. According to Edwards, man in his depraved natural condition was free to sin; yet he was not free to accept or reject the saving grace of God.

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1 Latourette, *op. cit.*, p. 960.
2 Sweet, SRA, p. 195.
The opposition to Edwards' views was supported by men of the New Haven school of thought. Among these men were Joseph Bellamy (1719-1790), Timothy Dwight (1752-1817), Lyman Beecher (1775-1863), and Nathaniel W. Taylor (1786-1858). In opposing Edwards' view of limited freedom, these men believed that man was free to choose or reject God. Regarding original sin they maintained that depravity was the result of man's voluntary transgression of the moral law. In this concept they were infralapsarian rather than supralapsarian concerning the alleged fall of man.

It should be noted that the theological controversies which resulted from the Great Awakening caused American Christianity to modify Calvinism. Edwards' attack of Arminianism stimulated his opponents in the defense of their own position. In attempting to refute Arminianism Edwards focused attention to Calvinism and its harsh doctrine of divine election. As a result strict Calvinism began to decline and Arminianism began to increase. Yet Edwards cannot be termed as a strict Calvinist. His love of humanity was the extension of his love for God. He accepted revivalism and was instrumental in causing personal religious experience to be recognized as essential to the Christian faith. As Latourette states, Edwards "made more room for the action of the sinner in accepting the divine forgiveness."¹

¹ Latourette, op. cit., p. 961.
B. RELATIONSHIP OF CHURCH TO FRONTIER LIFE

After the Revolutionary War the people became restless and turned toward the frontier to seek new land and a new way of life. They began to move into the interior of America, across the mountains, and into the west. A variety of motives caused the westward migration. Some sought new opportunities for self-improvement; others desired adventure. Indentured servants, those who earned their freedom and some who sought to escape the indentured system, joined the movement. The poor especially believed that a more abundant life awaited them across the mountains.

One of the challenges that confronted the church was the problem of how to keep pace with the rapidly moving population. From the viewpoint of the church it was believed that the emigrants would revert to a primitive state unless the established traditions were transplanted to the frontier. Many traditional customs were left behind when the pioneers crossed the mountains. The institutional restraints of the church diminished the farther west the pioneers settled.

Sweet compares the wilderness of the American pioneer with the forty years of Israelite life under Moses following the exodus from Egypt. He maintains that a general decline in religious morality is inevitable when people move away from established social restraint. It is true that the Hebrews fashioned a golden calf (Exodus, 32); however, the alleged decline in religion is debatable. The people under Moses actually discovered a new and higher level of religious faith; a faith that was given opportunity to expand once the Egyptian oppression was removed.

1 Sweet, RDNC, p. 134.
People who move away from the old patterns of life find it difficult to retain their cultural roots; however, the cutting off of old ways and the entrenched forms of life can lead to a new and better way of life. This fact is clearly evidenced by the settlement of America. The colonial pioneers did not revert to a primitive state; they found opportunity to create a new dynamic way of life when they found themselves free from some of the Old World restraints. The values inherited from Europe were conserved only to the extent of those values that were truly uplifting for humanity; the test that determined the survival of European values in America was human experience on the frontier.

In the same sense, the churches that survived on the American frontier, were the churches that were adaptable to frontier conditions.

1. Denominationalism. In the midst of the expanding frontier there were two forces at work: one was the church concept that the criterion of truth was to be found exclusively in revealed religion; the other was the idea that truth could be experienced in every phase of human life. The former idea was expressed in the Calvinistic creeds of the churches; the latter has been clearly expressed by George A. Gordon (1853-1927):

   Life stands at the center of the world, human life; whatever cleanses that, whatever redeems it from the power of evil, whatever gives it freedom, whatever greatens it and glorifies it, must be true. ...Life is central and supreme; life is the judge from whom there is no appeal as to what is true, beautiful, and good; the verdict of life overrides all other verdicts; what life approves, through its growth, power, joy, becomes our Divine Gospel; what life condemns, through its waste, weakness, and woe, has no right to be except in the synagogue of Satan.

   If Gordon had lived in the closing decade of the eighteenth century his statement would have been termed by the church as deistic.

Even during the last half of the nineteenth century his views were not accepted by the conservative element of the church.

Denominationalism on the frontier was an inheritance from the past. The dominant churches were the Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists. Later the Congregationalists and Episcopalians found root in the West. The Disciples, Adventists, and Mormons were also western churches. In addition there were many varities of smaller sects that dissented from the major denominations. There was no dearth of churches on the frontier by the time Lincoln was born. Churches were established wherever a community of pioneers could be found.

During the early days of pioneer settlement the clergymen were ordained men from the eastern churches. These men were alert to the new settlements and they lost no time in helping the people to organize churches. With the exception of the Plan of Union strategic planning was absent in the organization of frontier churches. The pattern of church establishment usually followed the frontier settlements according to the dominant denominational preferences of the people.

Denominationalism on the frontier was a "division of men into castes of national, racial, and economic groups." The Baptists, for example, did not have access to the fertile tideland regions of Virginia because the Episcopalians were in control of the land. The lack of cooperation between the two denominations was primarily the result of economic as well as ecclesiastical reasons. Moreover, the piedmont Baptists migrated west in search for better land; the tideland Episcopalians remained where they were—in their entrenched economic positions.

1 See the Plan of Union in the appendix, page 149.
2 Niebuhr, SSD, p. 6.
Relative to theology, denominationalism was still Calvinistic; although the churches retained the modified form inherited from New England. At the outset of the first establishments of Christianity on the frontier, theology was not as important as it was among the eastern churches. The frontier churches were in the process of being founded and theological debate was subordinate to the pressing needs of organization. Another factor that lessened the importance of theology was the lower level of standards for the ministry. With the exception of the Presbyterians, the frontier churches did not require a highly trained ministry. This fact does not indicate that educated ministers were absent from the frontier; rather that the Baptist, Methodist, and Disciple men were predominant.

The fact that organized Christianity did not exhibit a sense of unity under the name of Christ was the ethical failure of frontier denominationalism.\(^1\) Christiandom in the United States at the turn of the nineteenth century was represented by a greater diversity of forms than in any other period of its history. Instead of presenting an organized front to meet the challenges of an expanding frontier, the churches displayed a divisive spirit of competition against each other. Not being able to agree on religious matters, the churches were content to remain within the narrow spheres of their own activities. Each denomination claimed that it offered the exclusive God-approved doors to salvation and the doors were not opened to anyone unless certain standards of doctrine and discipline were adhered to. Thus the spirit of denominationalism in the time of Lincoln was characterized by divisive attitudes.

\(^1\) Niebuhr, loc. cit.
C. EVANGELISM ALONG THE FRONTIER

The second great awakening of religion was the most significant aspect of evangelism at the close of the eighteenth century. All of the denominations were effected by the general awakening of religious interest following the first decade after the Revolution; but the greatest effect was felt in the west. With the exception of the Roman Catholics, Protestant Episcopalians, Quakers, Lutherans, and Unitarians, the spirit of evangelism was characteristic of the churches. The second awakening employed the same revivalistic methods to recruit new members into the churches as did Edwards and Whitefield during the Great Awakening.

1. Scope of revivalism. Before treating the revivals specifically, it should be noted that the second awakening first began among the eastern colleges. Hampden-Sidney and Washington and Lee, Presbyterian colleges, were awakened as early as 1786 by a movement in which many of the students experienced religious conversions. In New England the Congregational colleges of Dartmouth and Amherst were stirred by new religious interest. No single individual was responsible for the increased interest in religion; the interest was spontaneous. The movement spread calmly without excess emotionalism.

In the western states of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio, the movement was attended with considerable excitement. Under the enthusiastic preaching of James McGready, Presbyterian minister in Logan County, Kentucky, the Cumberland revival began in 1797. By 1800 the revival had manifested an emotional trend that was not favored by the conservative Presbyterians, or Old Lights as they were called. New Light Presbyterians
supported the revival technique, providing however, that evangelistic preaching did not undermine the Calvinistic tenets of the West Minister Confession.

The spirit of revivalism spread throughout Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Carolinas, and as a new phenomena on the frontier, attracted large crowds. Salvation was offered to the people by preachers who were under slight theological restraint relative to the fine points of "election." The revival was a mass appeal, democratic in spirit, and directed to persuading all sinners to repent and be received into the Christian life on the profession of a definite religious experience.

The largest and most significant of the western camp meetings was the famous Cane Ridge revival held in Bourbon County, Kentucky, in 1801. Barton W. Stone, a Presbyterian minister before he founded the Disciples of Christ denomination in Kentucky, was the leader of the revival. The great crowds that attended the Cane Ridge meeting have been estimated as ranging from 10,000 to 25,000 people. The following account of the Cane Ridge revival is quoted from Sweet's record of an eyewitness to the meeting:

I attended with 18 Presbyterian ministers; and Baptist and Methodist preachers, I do not know how many; all being either preaching or exhorting the distressed with more harmony than could be expected. The governor of our State was with us and encouraging the work. The number of people computed from 10, to 21,000 and the communicants 828. The whole people were serious, all the conversation was of a religious nature, or calling in question the divinity of the work. Great numbers were on the ground from Friday until the Thursday following, night and day without intermission, engaged in some religious act of worship. They are commonly collected in small circles of 10 or 12, close adjoining another circle and all engaged in singing Watt's and Hart's hymns; and then a minister steps upon a stump or log, and

1 Sweet, SRA, p. 330.
begins an exhortation or sermon, when, as many as can hear collect around him. On Sabbath I saw above 100 candles burning at once and I saw 100 persons at once on the ground crying for mercy, of all ages from 8 to 60 years. . . . When a person is struck down he is carried by others out of the congregation, when some minister converses with and prays for him; afterwards a few gather around and sing a hymn suitable to the case. The whole number brought to the ground, under conviction, were about 1,000, not less. The sensible, the weak, etc., learned and unlearned, the rich and poor, are the subjects of it.

The preceding account illustrates the general nature of the revivalism that spread through the western frontier. There was a degree of harmony existing among the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist ministers. Revivalism for these churches was a common task in the saving of souls and it was more practical to work together than to work separately. Relative to church membership it is apparent that only one out of fifteen people was the communicant ratio of the church people who attended the revival. This indicates that the vast majority of the pioneers were non-church people.

One of the strange manifestations of frontier revivalism was the matter of the "jerks." Mode records Richard McNemar's The Kentucky Revival (1808), a contemporary account of revival phenomena:

Nothing in nature could better represent this strange and unaccountable operation than for one to goad another, alternately on every side, with a piece of red-hot iron. The exercise commonly begins in the head which would fly backward and forward, and from side to side with a quick jolt which the person would naturally labor to suppress but in vain, and the more any one labored to stay himself and be sober the more he staggered and the more rapidly his twiches increased. He must necessarily go as he was stimulated, whether with a violent dash on the ground and bounce from place to place like a football, or hop round with head, limbs, and trunk, twiching and jolting in every direction, as if they must inevitably fly asunder.

1 Sweet, SRA, pp. 330-331.
2 Mode, SBACH, p. 337. The investigator has witnessed similar revival phenomena in West Virginia as late as 1939 among the "Holy-Rollers."
The hysteria resulting from intense emotional and mental conflicts was occasioned by preaching to stir the imagination of the people to contemplate the everlasting delights of heaven and the literal fires of eternal punishment. The bodily contortions were often viewed as evidences of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The extremes of religious emotionalism were not entirely representative of the camp meetings. Emotional appeal was the design to motivate mass conversion; however, excessive emotion was the exception, not the rule of the religious experiences of the converted. Church leaders, particularly the Methodists, attempted to keep the meetings under control. Part of the control of the meetings involved the problem of dealing with the large crowds. Attending a camp meeting was a social event as well as a religious event for the pioneers.

Camp meetings had diminished in intensity by the time Lincoln was born; yet revivalistic meetings continued as a regular evangelistic process during the entire life of Lincoln. In fact, frontier revivalism set the pattern for church evangelism that continued into the twentieth century. Lincoln was familiar with frontier evangelism. But the appeals of the preachers did not get him to "confess" his "sins."

2. Results of revivalism. The second awakening was the natural development of conditions following the Revolutionary War. There was a decline in religious interest after the war. After a period of reflection, shifting of population, and a re-organization of life, a renewed interest in religion resulted as a natural consequence of human need—the need of a religious experience. The chief aim of the churches was the winning of the population to the Christian way of life. Revivalism became the

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1 Swope, RDAC, pp. 151-152.
"normal way of attaining this goal." ¹

The emotional trend in religious experience was characteristic of the frontier people. People of the eastern states had outgrown the early frontier of the colonial days. They were more restrained in religious matters. But on the frontier the physical isolation of the people created a desire for a social experience that the revivals provided. Emotional fervor was a natural outlet for the repressed feelings of the pioneers.

Niebuhr's observation is relevant at this point:

The reduction of life on the border to the bare fundamentals of physical and social existence, the dearth of intellectual stimulation and the lack of those effective inhibitions of emotional expression which formal education cultivates, the awesome manifestations of nature, the effects of which were not checked by the sense of safety permanent dwellings and the nearness of other men convey—all these made the settler subject to the feverish phenomena of revivalism.²

The primacy of individual experience in religion was a corollary of frontier independence; however, this same individualism resulted in church schisms. As Rowe expresses it, "in religion they had their own decided religious opinions."³ Such was the character of revivalism; it stimulated the old forms of religion and caused new ones to be founded. Stone and his followers, the Disciples, were the dissenters of the frontier. Thus the schismatic character of Christiandom was furthered by revivalism. The chief result, however, of frontier revivalism was the continued emphasis upon personal religious experience. But the difficulty for the individual was in deciding which branch of organized Christianity he should belong to.

¹ Latourette, op. cit., p. 1231.
² Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 142.
³ Rowe, op. cit., p. 86.
CHAPTER II

EARLY RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT OF LINCOLN

Before proceeding to the second chapter Lincoln's religious heritage should be briefly noted. The preceding chapter has surveyed the religious history of America to provide a setting for the Lincoln story. The importance of this approach is significant when it is realized that Lincoln's lineage dates back to the beginning of colonial history. While it is not the purpose of this research to deal extensively with the heritage of Lincoln, a few facts of his religious heritage should be considered.

The Lincoln family first came to America in 1637 when Samuel Lincoln, an Englishman, settled at Hingham, Massachusetts. 1 Samuel Lincoln was member of the Old Ship Church in Hingham; in fact, he was one of the original members of the church. By 1651 the Lincoln family had married into the Holmes family in Massachusetts, and it is significant to note that this action showed a mingling of Congregationalists with Baptists. Samuel Lincoln was a Congregationalist; Obadiah Holmes was a Baptist. The Baptists were from the beginning treated as heretics in Massachusetts. In 1651 Puritan intolerance toward dissenters involved the Lincoln family. Obadiah Holmes was tied to a whipping-post on Boston Common and received thirty strokes with a three-corded whip for holding doctrines contrary to the belief of the established church. 2 It is probable that the Lincoln family resented this action due to the marital ties of the two families.

2 Ibid., No. 1042.
On the other hand, though evidence is lacking, the Lincolns may have had a few dissenting beliefs themselves. The fact that they consented to marriage within a Baptist family indicates that they were not so concerned with doctrinal disputes. From the ethical viewpoint it is also probable that they rebelled against the harsh treatment of Baptists and Quakers. Roger Williams was banished from Massachusetts two years before Samuel Lincoln arrived; in 1656, five years after the Holmes' incident on Boston Common, four Quakers were hanged in Boston.

The Lincolns moved to New Jersey and here they encountered a continuation of the colonial persecution of dissenting religious groups. From New Jersey they went to Pennsylvania where they became affiliated with the Quakers through the marriage of Mordecai Lincoln, great great grandfather of the President. This ancestor of Abraham Lincoln was buried in a Quaker cemetery in Pennsylvania.¹

After moving to Virginia the Lincoln family became identified with the Baptists. Abraham Lincoln, grandfather of the President, was a member of the Linville Creek Baptist Church which was located near if not on the Lincoln property.²

Thus it is evident that family of the President was actively associated with organized Christianity during the colonial period. The family lived through the colonial days and was an integral part of the entire early American scene. It is difficult to correctly appraise the factors of the religious heritage Lincoln received; however, the fact of

¹ Warren, "IL" loc. cit.
² Loc. cit. Lincoln believed that a few of his ancestors were Quakers, but he was incorrect. They were affiliated with the Quakers only through marriage. There is no evidence that they were actually members of the Quaker denomination. The burial of Mordecai Lincoln in a Quaker cemetery is not sufficient proof of his membership.
heredity cannot be dismissed. The details of his religious heritage are not clear, but it is certain that many of his ancestors were church members. It is not important to this research to trace his ancestry back to England, but even there the evidence is certain that his people were actively identified with the church.

It is evident then that a survey of the church in America is important to an understanding of the religious environment of Lincoln. The following chapter is a continuation of the research as it concerns the immediate religious environment of Kentucky and Indiana.

A. DURING THE KENTUCKY RESIDENCE

In 1790 the first general census revealed a total population of approximately 4,000,000 in the United States. A rapid shift of population began following the Revolutionary War as the colonial people set out to settle the frontier. One movement of the pioneers was along the Mohawk Trail in New England. The people of the middle colonies advanced across the Allegheny mountains through southern Pennsylvania and Maryland. The Virginia and the Carolina emigrants followed the Wilderness Road over the Cumberland Gap into the regions of Kentucky and Tennessee. In 1792 Kentucky became a state, and by 1800 a population of 220,955 was recorded. This fact indicates the rapidity of western migration when it is noted that in 1779 Kentucky was inhabited only by approximately one-hundred and seventy-six white men.¹

These were the formative years of the nation. The growth of

¹ Sweet, RAF, Vol. II., p. 22.
democracy received a new impetus with the expansion of the frontier. As related to democracy the church was confronted with a critical test by the new development of western society. It is a serious question as to whether the church met the needs and fulfilled the new conditions of frontier life. The denominations that were transplanted to the western states did survive and a few which were more adaptable than the others forged ahead more rapidly. Nevertheless, it would be a serious mistake to assume that organized Christianity rendered an adequate service to the whole of frontier life. As this research will substantiate in subsequent chapters, life itself is infinitely larger and greater than the church has been willing to admit. The American frontier demonstrated that ethics, democracy, and humanity often found expression outside the church.

The greatness of Abraham Lincoln is rooted within the fabric of the American frontier. He was born in the midst of a new stream of life. His ancestors were pioneers and he was born in 1809 into a pioneer family of the Kentucky wilderness. The name of Daniel Boone (1735-1821), a frontiersman of the highest rank, was a living reality to the Lincoln family. Abraham Lincoln, grandfather of the President, was a friend of Boone and it is likely that Boone's stories of new land beyond the mountains motivated his journey from piedmont Virginia to Kentucky in 1782.

Boone had first visited Kentucky in 1767 and, regarding himself as ordained by God to settle the wilderness west of the Alleghenies, in 1775 he completed the Wilderness Road for the emigrants. He guided innumerable settlers to Kentucky along this wilderness route. This was the trail that Lincoln's grandfather traveled on his journey to Kentucky.

The first permanent white settlement occurred in Kentucky in 1774
when James Herrod founded Harrodsburg. From this time forward other settlements were soon established. Among the emigrants who settled the region were the English and Scotch or Scotch-Irish. In fact, ninety-five percent of these early settlers were of English and Scotch-Irish descent. In addition, the majority of the families who settled the territory during the Lincoln migration came from Virginia. They were chiefly Baptists and Presbyterians. It is estimated that one fourth of the Baptists in Virginia crossed the mountains and settled in Kentucky. As it has been pointed out the Lincoln family in Virginia was of the Baptist faith.

1. **Organization of churches.** As in the case of the majority of the early settlements church laymen were the first settlers. The first Baptists in Kentucky were laymen. Daniel Boone and Richard Calloway were Baptists and their settlement of Boonesborough in 1775 was inhabited chiefly by Baptists. The first Baptist clergymen known to have visited Kentucky were Thomas Tinsley and William Hickman in 1776. During 1779 and 1780 other Baptist ministers traveled to the territory.¹ Sweet's account of the Baptists on the frontier is significant:

Among the early emigrants across the Allegheny Mountains into Kentucky and Tennessee were numerous Baptists from Virginia and North Carolina. Generally speaking they belonged to the class, economically which would be attracted by the lure of cheap land. The pure democracy of Baptist church government would also tend to attract them to the freer life and the greater democracy of the frontier. Their preachers came from the people, and were self-supporting, and were themselves, indeed, farmers on the lookout for better land. Thus the Baptists were particularly well suited in their ideas of government, in their economic status, and in their form of church government to become the ideal western immigrants.²

¹ Newman, HBGUS, p. 333.
² Sweet, SRA, p. 312.
The Severn's Valley Baptist Church was the first Baptist church established in Kentucky. Joseph Barnett and John Garrad, Baptist clergy­men, were present at the founding of this church in 1781. The organization of other Baptist churches soon followed: the Forks of Dix Creek Church in 1782; South Elkhorn and Gilbert's Creek in 1783; and the Bear­grass Church in 1784. In 1785 a revival gained nine additional churches, and in the same year the first Baptist association in Kentucky was formed between the Separate and Regular Baptists. Concerning this union between the Separatists and Regulars, Newman says:

The short confession that formed the basis of union asserts the final perseverance of the saints and allows the preaching of the doctrine that Christ tasted death for every man. Most of the articles are so general that Arminians and Calvinists might agree in accepting them. Freedom is allowed to each party to continue its associational and church arrangements.

In 1784 only six Baptist churches were in existence in the territory. By 1792 the number of churches had increased to forty-two with a total membership exceeding four thousand. Three years after Lincoln's birth there were 285 churches with a membership of 22,694. The population of Kentucky had increased from 73,677 in 1790 to 406,511 by 1810. Nine years before Lincoln was born the Baptists had six associations, 106 churches, and 5,110 members. These facts indicate the swift growth of the denomination. There was no dearth of Baptist churches in Kentucky when Lincoln was born.

The term "Baptist" has been used thus far in a general way to

2 Ibid., p. 335.
3 Ibid., p. 336.
4 Ibid. cit.
include all the churches that belonged to this denominational faith; however, there were many different names associated with the Baptists. The terms "Old," "Old School," "Primitive," "Predestination," "Original," "Particular," "Regular," "Separate," and "Hardshell," indicate the prefixes that differentiated at least two dozen branches within the denomination. Such a variety of sects within one denominational faith must have been confusing to Abraham Lincoln.

Warren points out that William Herndon and William Barton were both in error when they assigned the Lincoln family as members of the Free Will Baptists and the Two-Seed-in-the-Spirit-Predestination Baptists. Herndon believed that Lincoln was a fatalist and attributed this alleged fact to the influence of the Free Will Baptists. The Free Will Baptists were Arminian in tendency, not Calvinistic. In the case of Barton, the Two-Seed Baptist group did not arise in Kentucky until 1820—four years after the Lincolns moved to Indiana.

There are not many facts available at the present time that reveal much about the church activities of the Lincoln family while they were in Kentucky. Evidence is available that indicates that Thomas Lincoln and his wife, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, were definitely affiliated with the Separate Baptists. At one time they lived near the Severn's Valley Baptist Church, a Separate church, and the oldest Baptist church west of the Alleghenies. The family later moved to a point one mile south of a

1 Warren, LPC, p. 232.
2 Ibid., p. 233.
3 Lot. cit.
4 Lot. cit.
5 "Lincoln Lore," No. 606.
Separate church, the South Fork Baptist Church. Warren says that the family probably worshipped in this church.\(^1\) It is also known that Thomas Lincoln was a member of the Little Mount Church, a Separate Baptist church.\(^2\) Caleb Hazel, one of Abraham Lincoln's school teachers, was a member of this church. The tradition is that Thomas Lincoln had no use for slavery, and it is possible that he was influenced by the Little Mount Church since it was known to be anti-slavery.\(^3\) It was at this church that the family became associated with David Elkin, pastor of the congregation while the Lincolns were in Kentucky.

Relative to the doctrinal aspects of the Baptist churches it is not necessary to present an analysis of each sect; however, the following excerpt quoted by Warren from J. H. Spencer's \textit{A History of Kentucky Baptists} (2 vols., 1886), provides an insight into the theological nature of the Regular and Separate Baptists:

\begin{quote}
The Regulars had adopted the Philadelphia Confession of Faith with some specified modification as an expression of their doctrine. The Separates refused to adopt "any creed but the Bible."
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Originally the Separate Baptists were more extreme Calvinists than the Regular Baptists; but refusing to adopt any creed or confession of faith they were constantly changing in their doctrinal views. They also had a wide diversity of opinion among themselves. . . The Arminian party of the Separates, constantly diverged farther and farther from the common standard of orthodoxy, till many grievous heresies crept in among them. . . \(^4\)
\end{quote}

Thomas Lincoln's choice in identifying himself with the Separatists seems to indicate that he did not fully approve of the more strict Calvinistic Baptist churches in Kentucky. Moreover, the Arminian tendency

\begin{itemize}
\item \(^1\) "Lincoln Lore," No. 606.
\item \(^2\) \textit{Lot. cit.}
\item \(^3\) \textit{Lot. cit.}
\item \(^4\) Warren, LPC, pp. 233-34.
\end{itemize}
of the Separate Baptists was evidence of the gradual modification of Calvinism along the frontier. Yet the fact remains that Calvinism was still the dominant theology of the churches.

After three attempts to form a union between the Regulars and the Separatists success was achieved following the influence of the second awakening of revivalism. In 1811 the Elkhorn Association and the South Kentucky Association finally compromised between Calvinism and Arminianism. Sweet quotes Spencer's *A History of Kentucky Baptists* (vol. II):

We, the committees of the Elkhorn and Southern Kentucky Associations, do agree to unite on the following plan. 1st. That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the infallible word of God, and the only rule of faith and practice. 2nd. That there is only one true Godhead or divine essence, there are Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. 3rd. That by nature we are fallen and depraved creatures. 4th. That salvation, regeneration, sanctification, justification, are by the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. 5th. That the saints will finally persevere through grace to glory. 6th. That believers' baptism by immersion is necessary to receiving the Lord's supper. 7th. That the salvation of the righteous, and punishment of the wicked will be eternal. 8th. That it is our duty to be tender and affectionate to each other, and study the happiness of the children of God in general; to be engaged singly to promote the honour of God. 9th. And that the preaching Christ tasted death for every man shall be no bar to communion. 10th. And that each may keep up their associational and church government as to them may seem best. 11th. That a free correspondence and communion be kept up between the churches thus united.

With the exception of article nine the foregoing statement is essentially Calvinistic. That Christ "tasted death for every man" was the Arminian influence. Article six, baptism by immersion, was characteristic of all the Baptists. Article seven, eternal punishment of the wicked, was definitely rejected by Abraham Lincoln as the ensuing research will show.

The records of the Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church from 1800 to 1820 and the minutes of the Elkhorn Baptist Association from 1785 to 1805 are representative of the prevailing theology among the Baptist churches in Kentucky when Abraham Lincoln was born. It is not assumed that Lincoln was concerned with theological matters while in Kentucky; yet even a young boy would know the difference between a religious person whose life was characterized by ethical love and a religious person whose life was motivated by harsh doctrine. His mother and father were examples of the former and the churches were full of people who met the standards of the latter.

For the purpose of this research it is not necessary to treat the establishment of the other denominations as fully as the Baptist denomination. It has been shown that the Lincoln family was closely associated with the Baptists. The other denominations provided additional churches in the larger environment of Lincoln; however, the direct influence of these churches was negligible. A brief summary will show the nature of these denominations as they existed in the time of the Lincoln residence in Kentucky.

The Presbyterians, due to their strategic location along the eastern foothills of the Alleghenies, made an immediate advance into Kentucky following the first settlements of Daniel Boone. As early as 1758 the Synods of New York and Philadelphia were interested in sending the clergy to the frontier to Christianize the pioneers. David Rice, commonly called the "father of Kentucky Presbyterianism," journeyed to

1 See Appendix, p. 143.
2 Sweet, SRA, p. 303.
Kentucky in 1783 and was instrumental in founding churches. The first churches were established in 1784, two years after Abraham Lincoln's grandfather arrived in the territory. By 1809 Presbyterianism had become firmly entrenched in Kentucky and by 1820 church membership was approximately 2,700.¹ There is no evidence that the Presbyterians had any direct influence on the Lincoln family while in Kentucky. The theology of the church was Calvinistic.²

The Methodists first appeared in Kentucky in 1784 and in 1786 the Kentucky Circuit was formed with James Haw and Benjamin Ogden as circuit-preachers.³ By 1800 there were six Methodist circuits in the state. Peter Cartwright, later associated with Lincoln in Illinois, served the Salt River and Shelby circuits five years before Lincoln was born.⁴ There is no evidence that Cartwright had any contact with the Lincoln family during either Kentucky or Indiana residences. The journal of Benjamin Lakin (1794-1820), provides an insight into the beliefs of the Methodists during this period.⁵ According to Lakin the Methodists were Arminian in theology and they exhibited a warm, experience-centered religion. Aside from the association of the Lincolns with Jesse Head, Methodist minister, there was no noticeable influence of the Methodists upon the family.

The Congregationalists were not organized in Kentucky while the

¹ Church membership during this period numbered one member in twelve for all the denominations.
² See Appendix for typical confession of faith, p. 145.
³ Sweet, RAF, Vol. IV, p. 52.
⁴ See Appendix for Cartwright’s description of frontier preachers, p. 146.
⁵ See Appendix, p. 147
Lincoln family was there. The first Congregational church established on the frontier was at Marietta, Ohio, in 1796. But there were no establishments in Kentucky; in fact there are few Congregational churches in the state at the present time. Congregationalists were slow in moving westward from New England and when they did migrate, Illinois became the area for settlement. As it has been pointed out, the majority of the people who settled Kentucky came from Virginia, Tennessee, and the Carolinas. Another reason why the Congregationalists were absent from the early western frontier was due to the Plan of Union formulated in 1801.\footnote{See Appendix, p. 149.}

The Plan of Union was a compact between the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians to promote mutual cooperation in carrying on missionary work on the frontier. In practice, however, the Presbyterians dominated the plan to the extent that distinctive Congregationalism did not appear as such until 1833 when the Mendon church was established in Illinois. Prior to this date the Congregationalists were content to remain anonymous within the Presbyterian churches. Lincoln probably did not see a Congregationalist until he moved to Illinois. His relationship with Owen Lovejoy will be discussed later in chapter four of the research.\footnote{Brother to Elijah P. Lovejoy who was killed by a pro-slavery mob in 1837.}

The Roman Catholics are mentioned in this dissertation merely to refute any claim that the church influenced Lincoln. The name of Zachariah Riney, a Roman Catholic, is associated with Lincoln because he was one of his Kentucky teachers. However, Riney was not a monk or a priest and there is no evidence that, as a Roman Catholic layman, he exerted any particular influence over Lincoln. The church was in
Kentucky as early as 1785 when twenty-five Roman Catholic families migrated from Maryland to Nelson County.¹ It was the first example of a religious group banding themselves together for the purpose of making a settlement on the frontier. Pottinger's Creek, settled by Roman Catholics in 1792, was the first Roman Catholic church founded west of the Alleghenies. The Trappist monks were in the state from 1805 until 1809, but left before Lincoln was born.² By 1815 there were nineteen churches in the state.

B. DURING THE INDIANA RESIDENCE

The first permanent settlement in Indiana was in 1784 at Clarksville. In 1787 the Northwest Ordinance was adopted and further migration resulted in the northwest territory of the Ohio River. In addition the Treaty of Greenville followed General Wayne's victory over the Miami Confederacy in 1794, thus opening the way for settlement in Ohio and Indiana.³ In 1805 Indiana was termed "Indiana Territory" and by 1809 Illinois was divided from the western portion of the territory. Tecumseh, the Shawnee chief, was defeated by William Henry Harrison, and this victory gave the white man further opportunity to settle the territory. The influx of pioneers moving into Indiana amounted to a population of 63,897 by 1816, the date the territory became a state. This was also the same year that Thomas Lincoln moved his family from Kentucky to Indiana.

When February, 1817, arrived Lincoln was eight years old. His

¹ Warren, LPC, p. 219.
² Ibid., p. 220.
³ Sweet, SRA, p. 300.
childhood in Kentucky was the formative period of his life; in Indiana he
grew to young manhood. In the fall of 1818 the first tragic experience
of his life occurred when his mother died. One of the controversies con-
cerning the religious nature of Lincoln was whether or not he assumed an
important role in connection with the funeral service of his mother.

Lincoln biographers have been divided over this question. One
group maintained that Lincoln was responsible in securing a minister to
preach the funeral sermon; another group rejected the story. Josiah G.
Holland, the most important of Lincoln's early biographers, wrote in 1866:

Several months after Mrs. Lincoln died, Abraham wrote a letter to
Parson Elkin, informing him of his mother's death, and begging him to
come to Indiana and preach her funeral sermon.1

According to Holland, Elkin responded to Lincoln's request by
riding almost one hundred miles from Kentucky to officiate at the funeral.2
In his attempt to portray Lincoln as an orthodox Christian, Holland accep-
ted the alleged story as fact.

A less known biographer, Rose Strunsky, elaborated the story by
stating:

The boy Abraham had his standards of life. There were things of
too much meaning to let pass without some gesture. And the uncere-
monious burial in the forest haunted him. When he heard that a
wandering preacher had reached the neighborhood, he tramped many miles
in the snow to bring him to the spot where the dead body lay, so that
a funeral sermon might be delivered over the now white grave.3

Strunsky did not mention Elkin's name, but it is evident that she
followed Holland's example of attempting to show that Lincoln was very
religious even at an early age. This was the kind of story that the

1 Holland, AL, p. 29.
2 David Elkin was pastor of the Little Mount Church in Kentucky.
3 Strunsky, AL, p. 6.
public received with great enthusiasm—the idea of a young boy attending to the funeral arrangements of his mother.

When William H. Herndon, Lincoln's law partner for twenty years, read Holland's account he was greatly disturbed over the apparent effort of Holland to magnify the incident. Herndon says:

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

William E. Barton concludes that Herndon "probably tells the truth" about the story. Barton and most of the modern biographers discredit Lincoln's alleged role in requesting Elkin to hold the funeral service. Evidence to substantiate the claim is lacking; however, there are indications that seem to refute Holland's position.

Louis A. Warren produces evidence from J. H. Spencer, Kentucky historian, that Elkin was practically illiterate. In addition Warren reports from an interview with Elkin's grandson, Field Elkin, that the grandfather did not know the alphabet when he first entered the ministry. Elkin may have learned later to read and write, but this cannot be proved. Furthermore, the Elkin family tradition does not mention a letter received from Lincoln concerning the matter. Field Elkin did recall that his grandfather traveled to Indiana in search of better land for

1 Herndon, IL, p. 27.
2 Barton, SAL, p. 40
3 Warren, LPC, p. 246.
4 Lot. cit.
his family, and that while he was there he visited the Lincoln family and preached Mrs. Lincoln's funeral.

An analysis of the Elkin-Lincoln incident indicates that too often biographers have seized the opportunity to magnify an event out of proportion. They have sought to account for his religious faith by assuming without evidence that he was a model orthodox Christian at every stage of his life. Stories of this nature show the hero-myth effort to idolize the childhood of a great man. The conclusion of this research relative to the incident is that Elkin did travel to Indiana in search of a new settlement for his family; that he learned of the death in the Lincoln family, and that he preached the funeral sermon. The idea that Lincoln was instrumental in securing Elkin for the service is unfounded. Thomas Lincoln was a church member and it seems likely that the father, not the boy, made the necessary arrangements with Parson Elkin.

1. Organization of churches. The first Baptists in Indiana came from Kentucky and Ohio in 1797. Organization of the first Baptist church was the Silver Creek Church in 1802.1 In 1806 the Wabash and Bethel churches were founded and by 1809 the Wabash and Whitewater associations had been organized. By 1812 Indiana had twenty-nine Baptist churches with 1726 members.2

The Pigeon Creek Baptist Church was the church with which the Lincoln family was affiliated during their residence in Indiana. This church was organized in 1816, but the first regular building was not

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2 Lot. cit.
erected until 1822. The church records are still extant which deal with the activities of the church during the Lincoln residence in Indiana. According to the church minutes, Thomas Lincoln united with the church by transfer of his Kentucky membership: "June 7, 1823, received Brother Thomas Lincoln by letter." He also made the pulpit and other church furniture and supported the church in every way. He served as a trustee of the church and remained in good standing in the church until he moved to Illinois in 1830. His wife, Sarah Bush Johnston Lincoln, whom he married after his first wife died, and his daughter, Sarah, were also members of the Pigeon Church. The records show that the church on April 8, 1826, "received Sister Sally Lincoln by experience of grace." Abraham Lincoln, however, did not join the Pigeon Church. Warren points out that one of the reasons why he did not join the church was probably due to the custom of the church in limiting membership to married persons. Warren says that the "marriage register of Spencer County, and old church records books, indicated that matrimony was almost a requisite for church membership." It is noted that Sarah Lincoln married Aaron Grigsby less than four months after joining the church. Also there were few young people listed on the Pigeon Church membership record.

1 Tarbell, IFL, p. 142.
2 Loc. cit.
3 "Lincoln Lore," No. 606.
4 Tarbell, op. cit., p. 143.
5 "Lincoln Lore," No. 661.
6 Loc. cit.
7 Loc. cit.
8 Loc. cit.
There were other reasons why Lincoln did not join a church in Indiana. A close examination of the Pigeon Church confession of faith reveals the harsh Calvinism that an individual had to accept in order to become a communicant. The doctrines of unconditional election, total depravity, atonement limited to the elect, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints are all contained in this confession. Emphasis was also placed on the eternal punishment of the wicked.

Lincoln's mature years reflect that even during his youth he had serious objections to the Calvinistic doctrines of the church. He could not accept the doctrine of the eternal punishment of the sinner and his nature rebelled against the general harshness of creedal statements. His mature thought and actions showed that he believed in man and the idea of total depravity was repugnant to him. On the other hand, it should not be assumed that the Pigeon Church was completely lacking in good influence. Lincoln knew that the church stood for religious faith and was concerned with high moral standards in the community. Tarbell says in this connection:

Abraham Lincoln never joined Pigeon Church. Its peculiar ceremonies made little or no impression upon him; but that he pondered deeply the articles of faith and the interpretation given them by those he heard in the pulpit, and in constant discussion of them that went on at his own and neighboring firesides, is certain. It is certain, too, that out of this pondering there came a deep reverence for the spirit of Christianity and a code of conduct for his relations with men and women as nearly in accord with the spirit of the Gospels, as high, as noble, as generous as that which has regulated the life of any man in the public life of this or any other country.

The ceremonies and articles of faith were accepted by his family, but his approach to life was different. Lincoln refused to be bound by

1 See Appendix, p. 150.
2 Tarbell, IFL, p. 145.
the doctrinal forms of the churches in his religious faith.

Presbyterianism in Indiana was organized in 1806 when the first church was established at Vincennes. By 1825, due to the missionary efforts of the New York Missionary Society and the Assembly's Board of Missions, the denomination had increased to forty-three churches with ten ministers.¹ The church moved along with the westward migration, but their numbers were not as great as that of the Baptists and Methodists. As in Kentucky, the Lincoln family was not influenced directly by the Presbyterians; however, the larger area of influence was evident. The doctrines of the church remained essentially the same as they were in Kentucky.²

The Methodists were organized in Indiana as early as 1801 when Benjamin Lakin crossed the Ohio River into the territory. No wilderness was too dense for the Methodist preachers to penetrate. In 1805 the Whitewater Circuit was organized.³ Peter Cartwright also preached in Indiana. In 1825 the Indiana District listed thirty Methodist clergymen and three presiding elders. Again as in Kentucky the Methodists had no direct contact with the Lincoln family.

C. MINISTERS OF THE PERIOD

The early religious environment cannot be correctly evaluated concerning the Lincoln story without including the ministers. It is not known how many ministers Lincoln saw when he lived in Kentucky and Indiana; however, there is enough evidence to show that he knew some of

² See Appendix, p. 145.
³ Sweet, RAF, Vol. IV, pp. 53-54.
Edgar DeWitt Jones evaluates the pioneer preachers as follows:

The pioneer preachers of the Middle West were a forthright, fearless and sacrificial host. They were certainly not in the business of preaching for mercenary reasons. For the most part in those early days they received little else but their board and some gifts of various natures, wearing apparel or produce, but little or no money, whether as itinerant revivalists or settled pastors. For years the latter were not numerous. These frontier heralds of the Cross combined with their preaching, farming, merchandising, carpentering, and, in some instances, the sale of Bibles and subscription books.¹

Jones' statement is favorable toward the clergy, and it is true generally, that the ministers were dedicated to their work. It is also true that the ministers were close to the family life along the frontier. In their traveling from place to place they often stayed at the pioneer cabins and came to know the hopes and fears of the people. They also influenced the lives of a great many people concerning religious doctrine and ethical living. However, no minister was able through his preaching or by the example of his life, to exert enough influence on Lincoln to persuade him to join a church.

The development of the following section will treat only those ministers who had an immediate contact with the Lincolns in Indiana and Kentucky. The ministers of Illinois and Washington, D.C. will be discussed later in the dissertation.

The first minister of any importance to the Lincoln story was Jesse Head, Methodist. In addition to being a minister, Head was also a "farmer, cabinet-maker, and justice of the peace."² The Washington County Court Order Book of May 2, 1798, records:

Ordered that Jesse Head and Benjamin Pile Esquires, be and they

¹ Jones, LP, p. 15.
² Warren, LFO, pp. 228-29.
are hereby appointed to employ some person to erect stocks, pillory, and a whipping post upon the public square in Springfield.

It is apparent that this whipping post was used not only for the recalcitrant white people, but for the Negroes. In this connection the record shows that Head listed three Negroes as slaves in 1803.

Head's only connection with the Lincoln family was the fact that on June 12, 1806, he officiated at the wedding of Nancy Hanks and Thomas Lincoln. He probably never saw Abraham Lincoln and he had no influence on the family.

David Elkin's influence has been mentioned in the foregoing chapter as the minister who preached the funeral sermon of Nancy Hanks Lincoln. Elkin was pastor of the Little Mount Church in Kentucky, and it is probable that he was one of the first ministers Abraham Lincoln ever heard preach. Warren quotes Spencer, the Kentucky historian, relative to an account of Elkin:

He was a man of extraordinary natural intellect, but was uncultivated being barely able to read. He was extremely poor as to this world's goods; and what was worse he was very indolent and slovenly in his dress. Yet it pleased the Lord to use him to good account in the early days of his ministry. . . . His reputation was somewhat sullied in his latter years, perhaps from too free use of strong drink.

Lincoln was aware of the use of whiskey among many of the clergy on the frontier. In his address on temperance before the Springfield Washington Temperance Society, February 22, 1842, he said:

It commonly entered into the first draught of the infant, and the last draught of the dying man. From the sideboard of the parson, down to the ragged pocket of the houseless loafer, it was constantly found.

1 Warren, LPC, p. 229.
2 Ibid., pp. 229-30.
3 Warren, OP cit., p. 246.
4 Basler, CWAL, Vol. 1, p. 274.
Mention should be made of William Downs, Baptist, because he was the first minister of the Little Mount Baptist Church in Kentucky. He was also a brother of Thomas Downs, Baptist, who was one of the ministers of the Pigeon Creek Baptist Church in Indiana. Concerning William Downs' ability to preach, Warren quotes Spencer:

He received a fair English education for that time and adopted the profession of school teaching. . . . He commenced exercising soon after he was baptised and gave evidence of such extraordinary gifts that the church too hastily had him ordained to the ministry. . . . He possessed extraordinary natural gifts and was one of the most brilliant and fascinating orators in the Kentucky pulpit in his day. . . . Mr. Downs was fond of controversy and engaged in several debates. His exceeding familiarity with the sacred scriptures, his ready wit, keen sarcasm and brilliant oratory, attracted the attention and won the admiration of the most intelligent and refined people within the limits of his acquaintance. Hon. Benjamin Hardin one of the leading lawyers and statesmen of Kentucky, greatly admired his oratory and embraced every opportunity to hear him preach. . . . He raised up a large church called Little Mount. It was located three miles north east of Hodgenville, and contained a number of highly respected citizens.2

Relative to the reputation of Downs as a man, Spencer says:

He was indolent, slovenly, and self indulgent. This rendered him almost useless to society and perhaps worse than useless to the cause of Christ. . . . He preached but a short time before he was summoned before the church to answer the charge of being intoxicated. . . . Rolling Fork Church publicly excluded him and requested Salem Association to advertise him. This was done in the minutes of that body in 1805. . . . He was clad extremely shabbily. He had on a pair of course, short tow-linen pantaloons, and old wool hat with a piece of leather sewed in the crown, and a pair of course cow skin shoes, without socks. . . . His moral character was so defective that he exercised little influence for good. He died in poverty and obscurity about the year 1860.3

The foregoing account gives a description as well as an evaluation of Downs; however, it should be noted that his drinking did not obscure his sense of human values relative to slavery. He was an emancipationist.

1 "Lincoln Lore, No. 84.
2 Warren, LPC, pp. 242-43.
3 Loc. cit.
Before turning to the ministers associated with the Lincolns in Indiana it should be pointed out that the ministerial influence of Kentucky was during a period of only the first seven years of Lincoln's life. It is difficult to evaluate the influence of the clergy over a small boy. His parents were church members in good standing and it is possible that a few ministers made pastoral calls on the family, ate with the family, and discussed religion with Thomas and his wife. Whatever the psychological impressions Abraham Lincoln may have had from contact with the ministers, it is apparent that these leaders of organized Christianity failed to impress him favorably.

In Indiana the family church was the Pigeon Church and there were several ministers associated with this church. Jones reports the tradition that young Abraham assisted in the construction of the first house, or cabin, of worship.¹ The following description of building a church shows the roughness of frontier life in 1820:

The church, which stood one mile west of what is now Lincoln City, was built of logs, with a stick and mud chimney. It was a long, narrow building one and a half stories high, having a very large fireplace on one side of the building, with a pulpit made of roughly hewn boards. It had a window (with no glass, but heavy wooden shutters immediately behind it) at one end of the structure, and a ladder leading to the upper story where the people who came great distances might stay over night. Split logs, with wooden pegs for legs, and a puncheon floor, were also features of this church, the logs of which were sold and used in the building of a barn.²

Thomas Downs assisted in the organization of this church.³ Samuel Bristow was the first regular preacher of the church. He officiated

¹ Jones, LP, p. 18.
² Lot. cit.
³ "Lincoln Lore," No. 84.
at the marriage of Dennis F. Hanks and Elizabeth Johnston, step-sister of Abraham Lincoln, on June 14, 1821, at the Lincoln home.¹ The fact of a minister being in the home of Lincoln to perform a marriage ceremony proves that a minister was not a stranger to him.

One of the other Indiana ministers, Jeremiah Cash, was also a pastor of the Pigeon Church. The indication is that Cash was an independent preacher relative to theology. An incident dealing with Cash is recorded in the church records for September, 1829:

On Friday after the session adjourned one of their body stated in conversation with some persons that he believed that the doctrine of Predestination came from Hell & would go there and all who preached it.²

As a result of the opposition against him Cash withdrew from the session. From this evidence it is clear that some of the ministers on the frontier were questioning the doctrines of Calvinism. Relative to how strict the Pigeon Church was regarding its ministers the following last paragraph is quoted from the confession of faith (the entire confession is included in the appendix):

We believe that no minister ought to preach the gospel, that is not called and sent of God, and they are to be, proved by hearing them, and we allow none to preach amongst us but such as are well recommended and that we ought to contribute to him who faithfully labors among us in word and doctrines according to our several abilities of our temporal things.³

From this it is seen that the test applied to a minister's "call to preach" was doctrinal; he had to subscribe to the doctrines of the church or he would not be permitted to preach in the church. It is

₁ "Lincoln Lore," No. 84.
₂ Loc. cit.
₃ Tarbell, IFL, p. 144.
evident that doctrinal rather than ethical considerations were primary in the thinking of the religious leader. A man may practice love and good will among his neighbors and seek the brotherhood of all men, but unless he adhered strictly to a prescribed doctrine, he was not accepted in the religious fellowship. Lincoln was not unaware of these doctrinal emphases of the Pigeon Church, and he was not oblivious to the doctrinal disputes that arose in the church.

Warren estimates that approximately twenty-five ministers served various churches in, and adjacent to, Spencer County during the Lincoln residence.¹ The conclusion is substantiated that Lincoln had opportunity to hear the preaching of ministers during his Indiana youth. But their preaching did not "convert" him to Christianity.

¹ "Lincoln Lore," No. 84.
CHAPTER III

RELATIONSHIP OF LINCOLN TO THE CHURCH

The relationship of Lincoln to the church is one of the basic considerations of this dissertation. A research of this nature must deal specifically with his attitude toward the church. What was his concept of the church? What was his attitude toward the clergy and church members? Was he indifferent to the claims of institutional Christianity? Why did he refuse to become a member of the church? These are fundamental questions and they raise important issues concerning the Lincoln story.

On the other hand, it is of equal importance to deal specifically with the attitude of the church toward Lincoln. What was the contemporary view of the church toward him? Was the attitude of the church favorable or unfavorable? What was the opinion of the clergy toward him? What did the church think of his refusal to identify himself with organized Christianity? These basic questions raise important issues regarding the church.

The following chapter will present a critical examination of the relationship of Lincoln to the church. The primary sources for the investigation are drawn from the writings of Lincoln as they are contained in Roy P. Basler's edition of The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (1953). Individual speculation concerning Lincoln's relationship to the church cannot substitute for the personal statements of Lincoln himself. The words of Lincoln tell their own story.
A. ATTITUDE OF LINCOLN TOWARD THE CHURCH

The attitude of Lincoln toward the church was a process that began with his first contact with the church in Kentucky. The preceding chapters of this research have described the religious background of the churches in Kentucky. Moreover, a description of the organizational and theological aspects of the churches has been presented. This same approach has been applied to the churches of Indiana. It has been shown that Lincoln's parents were active church members. From all this evidence it has been concluded that Lincoln grew up within a definite religious atmosphere. There was no lack of church influence in his life. Within the formative years of the Kentucky and Indiana residences the attitude of Lincoln toward the church was being formed; and the content of his attitude was to be expressed during his mature years.

1. During the Illinois residence. The residence of Lincoln in Illinois began when Thomas Lincoln moved his family to the state in March, 1830. Lincoln was twenty-one years of age. After a trip to New Orleans in 1831 he returned to New Salem and became associated with Denton Offutt in the general store business. During his seven years in New Salem he was occupied with different interests. He split rails, worked in a store, was a soldier in the Black Hawk War, served as a postmaster, was elected to the state legislature, studied law, and was admitted to the bar in 1837.

A definite church building was lacking in New Salem during Lincoln's residence. Irregular services were held in the Rutledge tavern where he lived. It is possible that he also attended services at the Concord

1 Barton, SAL, p. 54.
Church, a Presbyterian church located near New Salem. There is no evidence that he was a regular church attendant during his New Salem residence. However, in a letter to Mary S. Owens written shortly after he moved to Springfield on March 15, 1837, there is an indication that he probably did attend church while in New Salem:

I've never been to church yet, nor probably shall be soon. I stay away because I am conscious I should not know how to behave myself.2

Although it is possible that Lincoln had at least attended church occasionally in New Salem; however, the letter alludes mainly to his reluctance to attend church in Springfield. He was aware of a difference between the "city" churches of Springfield and the "country" churches around New Salem. Lincoln probably felt that the more formal worship services of the Springfield churches were too refined and that, indeed, he would be conscious of not knowing "how to behave" himself. He was to become, however, an attendant of church services in Springfield.

Before dealing with Lincoln's Springfield residence the significance of the "burnt book" incident should be noted. The story of the incident is related by Herndon:

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

1 Jones, LP, p. 19.
2 Basler, CWAL, I, p. 65.
where it was read and freely discussed. His friend and employer, Samuel Hill, was among the listeners, and, seriously questioning the propriety of a promising young man like Lincoln fathering such unpopular notions, he snatched the manuscript from his hands and thrust it into the stove. The book went up in flames, and Lincoln's political future was secure.1

Herndon's report of this incident was published in Lamon's biography in 1872 and other biographers have either retained the story or omitted it, depending on the religious evaluation they gave of Lincoln. Barton's treatment of the story is the most extensive study that has been made.2

The basis of Herndon's evidence came from James H. Matheny, a lawyer colleague of Lincoln; however, Matheny merely heard the story from Lincoln and did not see the alleged book himself. Mentor Graham, the schoolmaster of New Salem who aided Lincoln in his studies, held that he had seen a manuscript written by Lincoln on the subject of a defense of universal salvation. According to Barton's conclusion, the evidence points to the fact that Lincoln did write a manuscript of a religious nature, but that the alleged "burnt book" was actually a letter written by Samuel Hill to Richard McNamur concerning Ann Rutledge.3 Lincoln had acquired the letter, as postmaster, when the school children found it and gave it to him. The letter had been lost by Hill, and Lincoln, recognizing the handwriting on the envelope, kept it. Later he discussed the letter with Hill, and it was this letter that was burned by Hill instead of the religious manuscript.4

The purpose of including this incident in the research is to point

1 Herndon, LL, p. 355.
2 Barton, op. cit., pp. 146-55.
3 Lot. cit.
4 Lot. cit.
out that there is evidence of Lincoln's interest in religious matters several decades before this interest became manifested in his life and in his speeches. It is entirely possible that Lincoln did write a paper on religion and that his thoughts were not in accordance with the accepted tradition of the church. The indication that he was capable of writing on the subject of religion is implied by his reply to the charges of infidelity made against him in 1846:

It is true that in early life I was inclined to believe in what I understand is called the "Doctrine of Necessity"—that is, that the human mind is impelled to action, or held in rest by some power, over which the mind itself has no control; and I have sometimes (with one, two or three, but never publicly) tried to maintain this opinion in argument. The habit of arguing thus however, I have, entirely left off for more than five years.

The full text of this above excerpt will appear later in the chapter; however, for the present purpose of the statement, it indicates that Lincoln did discuss the subject of religion, at least, with his friends. This investigation maintains that the "burnt book" incident reveals the questioning attitude of Lincoln toward the prevailing religious concepts of the church. The evidence is not clear relative to the content of the attitudes he held.

In 1837 Lincoln arrived in Springfield and he remained a resident of the city until his departure to Washington, D. C., February 11, 1861. During the Springfield residence Lincoln became acquainted with different clergymen. He also attended church after his marriage to Mary Todd on November 4, 1842. But his attendance cannot be termed as regular until after the death of his second son, Edward Baker Lincoln, on February 1,

1850. Before presenting the subsequent developments of this family tragedy, however, it is necessary to deal with those experiences of Lincoln's relationship with the church prior to 1850.

The Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield invited Lincoln to speak before the group on January 27, 1838. During the course of the address Lincoln mentioned specifically his attitude toward the church relative to reverence for the law:

Let reverence for the laws, be breathed by every American mother, to lisping babe, that prattles on her lap--let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges;--let it be written in Primers, spelling books, and in Almanacs;--let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. In short, let it become the political religion of the nation; and let the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the grave and the gay, of all sexes and tongues, and colors and conditions, sacrifice unceasingly upon its altars.

Lincoln recognized the proper responsibility of the churches along with other institutions concerning the safeguard of society through law. The churches, according to him, should be instrumental in helping to instil within the people obedience to the laws through a motivation of reverence.

On February 22, 1842, Lincoln spoke to the Springfield Washington Temperance Society. Excerpts from this address depict his attitude toward the harsh treatment of people addicted to alcoholic liquors by the church:

The warfare heretofore waged against the demon of Intemperance, has, some how or other, been erroneous. Either the champions engaged, or the tactics they adopted, have not been the most proper. The champions for the most part, have been Preachers, Lawyers, and hired agents. Between these and the mass of mankind, there is a want of approachability, if the term be admissible, partially at least, fatal to their success. They are supposed to have no sympathy of feeling or interest

1 Basler, GWAL, Vol. I, p. 112.
with those very persons whom it is their object to convince and per-
suade.

When the conduct of men is designed to be influenced, persuasion,
kind, unassuming persuasion, should ever be adopted. It is an old
and true maxim, that a "drop of honey catches more flies than a
gallon of gall." So with men. If you would win a man to your cause,
first convince him that you are his sincere friend. Therein a drop
of honey that catches his heart, which, say what he will, is the
great high road to his reason, and which, when once gained, you will
find but little trouble in convincing his judgment of the justice of
your cause. ¹

The inference of Lincoln is explicit. He knew from his contact
with the church in Indiana and Illinois the attitude of the church toward
drinking. He was aware of innumerable cases where the church had expelled
persons on drinking charges. He was familiar with the harsh, unforgiving
spirit of the church toward the drunkard. Lincoln's approach to the
problem was ethical. He knew what persons could become if they could
have the understanding of people. He recognized the potentialities for
good in evil situations and advocated the spirit of usefulness in helping
to right the situations. He was aware of the failure of the church at
this point. Toward the end of the address Lincoln pointed out that no
genuine Christian would hesitate to join "a reformed drunkard's society"
in order to influence the "erring, and unfortunate class of their own
fellow creatures."² Contrary to his assumption, Lincoln knew that the
majority of Christians—rather church members—were not prone to con-
descend to the level of associating with drunkards for fear of being
contaminated with evil.

² Ibid., pp. 277-78.
There is evidence that Lincoln had contact with the First Christian Church (Disciples) in Springfield. Josephus Hewett, pastor of the church, was admitted to the bar and practiced law in Springfield.¹ Jones mentions this fact in connection with a letter that Lincoln wrote to Hewett in 1848; however, Jones omits the fact that Hewett was living in Natchez, Mississippi, at the time.² Jones is correct, however, in pointing out that there was a close friendship between Lincoln and Hewett. An examination of a letter Lincoln wrote to Hewett from Washington, D. C., February 13, 1848, proves this point. Lincoln addressed Hewett in terms that implied a close friendship.³ However, it should be noted that since Hewett was also a lawyer in Springfield, Lincoln's relationship with him was probably through the practice of law rather than through the church.

Lincoln was not so adverse to the church that he avoided the clergy. In fact during the course of his life he knew a few clergymen quite intimately. Hewett was one of these ministers.

A Methodist minister of Springfield, Charles Reynolds Matheny, was closely associated with Lincoln. He and Lincoln served together as trustees of Springfield, and in 1839, Lincoln was his attorney in a court case. Lincoln also gave his support to Matheny when he was a candidate for county clerk in 1837 and 1839.⁴ There is no evidence, however, that he attended the Methodist church while in Springfield. Lincoln's appreciation of the Methodist church during the war years did indicate, however, that he held a high regard for the church.

¹ Basler, CWAL, I, p. 451.
² Jones, op. cit., p. 21.
³ Basler, op. cit., p. 450.
and it is evident that his association with Matheny was instrumental in this respect.

Lincoln was acquainted with another Methodist minister in Springfield. His relationship with James F. Jaquess, pastor of the Methodist Church in Springfield and later a colonel in the Seventy-third Illinois Infantry, will be treated in Section C of this chapter.

A Presbyterian minister, Albert Hale, is said to have been "a friend and counselor to the Martyr President." Hale was pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Springfield. Lincoln knew Hale and admired him, but the term "counselor" as it appears on Hale's memorial tablet in the Presbyterian Church (now called Westminster), is probably an exaggerated depiction. There is no evidence that Lincoln turned to Hale for counseling.

The most important evidence relative to Lincoln's attitude toward the church was his relationship with James Smith, minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Springfield. The relationship of Lincoln with Smith and the Presbyterian church began when Edward Baker Lincoln, Lincoln's second son died. "Little Eddie" became ill in December 1849. His mother did everything in her power to nurse him back to new health, but all efforts failed. On February 1, 1850, Eddie died. Lincoln was constantly close to his family during this time (often his circuit work had separated him from his family). The fifty-two days of Eddie's illness were extremely difficult for the family--a trying ordeal of hope that faded to despair at the approach of death.

This experience of loss--a common sorrow of humanity--brought the

1 Jones, op. cit., p. 25.
sounds of an inexpressible grief to the Lincoln home. The heartbroken loneliness of the deep tragedy was tempered in part by the kindness of neighbors; yet the common reaching out by friends to comfort the bereaved could not solace completely the family grief. This was the first of the hard blows of life that were to strike at the Lincoln family.

While it is impossible to analyze completely the influence of Eddie's death on the religious faith of Lincoln, it is significant to realize that the common experience of personal loss in the time of death usually deepens an awareness of the eternal verities. The ancient questions of life and death, of man's creation, his purpose on earth, and his final destiny were undoubtedly confronted by Lincoln after the first poignant agony resulting from the loss of Eddie. Lincoln loved his family and it is understandable to realize that Eddie's death was a tragic reality. Eddie was gone; yet Lincoln knew that life must continue. Although the mark of death is never effaced by time and experience, the Lincolns did resume a normal life. Less than a year from the time of Eddie's death another son, William Wallace Lincoln, was born.

There is no evidence that Lincoln blamed God for the death of his son. His despair was the natural despair of a father in time of grief, but he did not turn against God. In fact, his subsequent speeches indicate a deepening of religious faith. It is apparent that the spiritual reality of life pervaded his nature and he was able to arise from a time of stark despair to a new level of hope.

As a result of this family tragedy and due to the pastoral concern

1 Randall, MLRM, p. 141.
of Smith, a close friendship developed between the minister and the Lincoln family. In 1852 Mrs. Lincoln became a member of the Presbyterian Church and a family pew was rented at the annual rate of fifty dollars.\(^1\) Lincoln and his wife attended services at this church until they moved to Washington in 1861.

The testimony of Thomas Lewis who served the church as an elder, trustee, and treasurer, reports the following information relative to Lincoln's relationship with the church:

Mr. Lincoln asked me to rent him a pew, and I offered him one just vacated by Governor Madison, whose term had ended and who was leaving Springfield. He took it and occupied it regularly with Mrs. Lincoln, and though she had been an episcopalian, she joined our church at the first communion and I confidently believe Mr. Lincoln would have joined too had he been there. \(...\) he never joined the church, but he gave liberally toward its support.\(^2\)

The statement of Mrs. Annie C. Fox is also noteworthy:

I came to Springfield in 1856. My husband, Benjamin Fox, had been engaged in business here several years before that time. Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Fox were personal friends. They attended the same church, the First Presbyterian. \(...\) Mr. Lincoln was a regular attendant at church. He always paid close attention to the sermons and took an active part in the services.\(^3\)

Not long after the death of their son, the Lincolns visited Mrs. Lincoln's people in Lexington, Kentucky. While they were there, Lincoln began reading James Smith's *The Christian's Defense* (1843), a theological book "containing a fair statement and impartial examination of the leading objections urged by infidels against the antiquity, genuineness, credibility and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures."\(^4\)

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\(^1\) Barton, *op. cit.*, p. 159.
\(^2\) "Lincoln Lore," No. 1185.
\(^3\) Lot. cit.
After Lincoln returned to Springfield he secured a copy of the book from the author, James Smith—Lincoln's Presbyterian pastor. In a letter written by Smith to Herndon, dated January 24, 1867, he presents the following evidence relating to the incident:

It was my honor to place before Mr. Lincoln arguments designed to prove the divine authority and inspiration of the Scriptures, accompanied by the arguments of infidel objectors, in their own language. To the arguments on both sides Mr. Lincoln gave a most patient, impartial and searching investigation. To use his own language, he examined the arguments as a lawyer who is anxious to investigate truth investigates testimony. The result was the announcement made by himself that the argument in favor of the divine authority and inspiration of the Scriptures was unanswerable.

The subsequent treatment of Lincoln's view of the Bible will be presented in chapter five of the dissertation; however, the significance of the relationship of Lincoln with Smith illustrates the open nature of his mind. Lincoln desired to search out the truth concerning the Bible and was willing to discuss the problem with Smith. It depicts his attitude toward the church in the sense that if the church possessed the truth, Lincoln wanted to know what it was. The statement of Smith, however, is not conclusive evidence that Lincoln accepted his view of biblical inspiration or his interpretation of the Bible.

During the remaining years of his Springfield residence, Lincoln attended church whenever he had opportunity, and he kept his pew rent paid in the First Presbyterian Church. These were the formative years of his life relative to his political ambitions. The years were also spent in seeking the truth relative to religious matters. Although he attended church and was associated with the clergy, there is no evidence

1 Barton, *op. cit.*, 158.
that he accepted the form and content of Christianity as represented by orthodox theology.

Before Lincoln went to Washington the slave issue had become acute. He had been shocked by the death of Elijah P. Lovejoy, killed by a pro-slavery mob at Alton, Illinois, in 1837, as a result of his attempt to defend his right to publish abolition ideas. Lovejoy was a brother to Owen Lovejoy, a Congregational minister at Princeton, Illinois, and a friend of Lincoln. Owen Lovejoy was also an abolitionist and he supported Lincoln's views toward slavery, although Lovejoy's approach was radical.

It should be noted that Lincoln was aware of the attitude of the church toward slavery, and in a fragment of a speech that may have been delivered to the Republican County Convention at Edwardsville, Illinois, May 18, 1858, he implied that the church was not measuring up to Christian harmony:

... in those four years, there has really been more angry agitation of this subject, both in and out of Congress, than ever before. And just now it is perplexing the mighty ones as no subject ever did before. Nor is it confined to politics alone. Presbyterians assemblies, Methodist conferences, Unitarian gatherings, and single churches to an indefinite extent, are wrangling, and cracking, and going to pieces on the same question.1

Again in his sixth debate with Stephen A. Douglas over the issue of slavery, Lincoln described the condition of organized Christianity regarding the problem. The following excerpt is quoted from his speech delivered at Quincy, Illinois, October 13, 1858:

Does it not enter into the churches and rend them asunder? What divided the great Methodist Church into two parts, North and South?

1 Basler, CWAL, II, p. 452.
What has raised this constant disturbance in every Presbyterian General Assembly that meets? What disturbed the Unitarian Church in this very city two years ago? What has jarred and shaken the great American Tract Society recently, not yet splitting it, but sure to divide it in the end. Is it not this same mighty, deep seated power that somehow operates on the minds of men, exciting and stirring them up in every avenue of society—in politics, in religion, in literature, in morals, in all the manifold relations of life? ¹

As the slavery issue continued, resulting in civil war among the people, Lincoln could not understand the division in organized Christianity. He could describe the conditions of a split church, but could not justify the church dividing over the issue of slavery.

With the nation on the brink of civil war, Lincoln was elected president. Realizing the great obligations of the presidential task before him and the increasing problems of disunion, he evidenced his maturing personal religious faith and a growing trust in God when he delivered his farewell address at Springfield, February 11, 1861:

My friends—No one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe every thing. Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when, or whether ever, I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being, who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him, who can go with me, and remain with you and be every where for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.²

The religious implications of this speech are readily apparent. The words are simple and direct; yet they contain the essence of life itself. The salutation "My friends" was no political affectation; it was genuine—the Springfield people were his friends. They had been his

¹ Basler, op. cit., III, p. 310.
² Ibid., IV, p. 190.
neighbors for "a quarter of a century." The immemorial feeling of sadness at leaving friends of long standing pervaded Lincoln's being. He remembered the kindnesses of the people and he expressed his deep gratitude—heartfelt appreciation for the people and the city he had come to love. In Springfield he began his career as a young man; he was married in this city and knew the joys of family life. A decade had passed since he buried one of his sons, but the memory of Eddie's passing remained fresh in his mind—a father's tribute of continuing love and thoughts of a small grave.

With a realization of the national task of his office and the difficulties which confronted him, Lincoln knew that he stood in a position similar to that of Washington. He expressed his belief in God, "that Divine Being," in a sense that God was active in human affairs, not passive. With positive assurance he affirmed his faith that with the "assistance" of God he would succeed in the task before him. Two aspects are evident in his faith; a recognition of man's dependence upon God and a belief in the active role of God in human history. Moreover, his personal relationship with God was evident to the people when he requested their prayers on his behalf. He was a man of prayer, and he was optimistic in believing that if God's will were sought, all would "yet be well."

1. As President. It is not known exactly how soon the Lincolns began to attend church in Washington. Within a month, however, they had made arrangements to attend the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church. The pastor, Phineas D. Gurley, soon became a close friend of the family.

1 "Lincoln Lore," No. 1185.
The testimony of William Henry Roberts, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian General Assembly, states that Lincoln was "an earnest and devout worshiper" in Gurley's church, and that Gurley provided opportunity for him to sit in the pastor's room with the door open to listen to the weekly prayer meetings. The action of Lincoln in this respect was to avoid the church crowds during the busy days of the war.

What was the attitude of Lincoln toward the church during the war years? In his proclamation of a National Fast Day, August 12, 1861, he indicated his reliance upon the churches to earnestly observe the day with prayer:

... I ... do appoint the last Thursday in September next, as a day of humiliation, prayer and fasting for all the people of the nation. And I do earnestly recommend to all the People, and especially to all ministers and teachers of religion of all denominations, and to all heads of families, to observe and keep that day according to their several creeds and modes of worship, in all humility and with all religious solemnity, to the end that the united prayer of the nation may ascend to the Throne of Grace and bring down plentiful blessings upon our Country.

It was the hope of Lincoln that all the churches would feel a genuine sense of unity as they meditated upon the spiritual needs of a nation at war with itself.

Various denominational groups wrote and visited Lincoln during the war years for the purposes of offering their prayers, suggestions, and criticisms. Lincoln expressed his appreciation to one of these groups, the Society of Friends, in a letter dated March 19, 1862:

Engaged, as I am, in a great war, I fear it will be difficult for the world to understand how fully I appreciate the principles of peace, inculcated in this letter, and everywhere, by the Society of

1 Johnson, ALC, p. 13. See Appendix, page 151, for Roberts' full text.
2 Basler, op. cit., IV, p. 432.
Friends. Grateful to the good people you represent for their prayers in behalf of our common country, I look forward hopefully to an early end of war, and return of peace.

Neither the prayers of Lincoln or the churches were able to bring an early end to the war. Yet Lincoln still relied personally upon the spiritual benefits of prayer and he reiterated his dependence upon the churches by another response to the church on May 13, 1862, when he said to a representation of Lutherans:

You may recollect that in taking up the sword thus forced into our hands this Government appealed to the prayers of the pious and the good, and declared that it placed its whole dependence upon the favor of God. I now humbly and reverently, in your presence, reiterate the acknowledgment of that dependence, not doubting that, if it shall please the Divine Being who determines the destinies of nations that this shall remain a united people, they will, humbly seeking the Divine guidance, make their prolonged national existence a source of new benefits to themselves and their successors, and to all classes and conditions of mankind.2

It should be noted that Lincoln was chiefly concerned with the prayers of "the pious and the good," and that this designation did not limit the efficacy of prayer to church members. He was concerned with the value of prayer irrespective of denominations. The prayers of a non-church member, if genuinely pious, were beneficial according to Lincoln's thought.

One of the most important sources dealing with Lincoln's attitude toward the church was his reply to the delegation of Chicago Christians of All Denominations on September 13, 1862, when the ministers presented him with a memorial in favor of national emancipation: namely, that he asserted his own individual right to seek the will of God in the matter.3 He stated that he had been approached by similar groups relative to the

1 Basler, op. cit., V, p. 165.
2 Ibid., pp. 212-13.
3 Ibid., pp. 423-24. For extended excerpt, see Appendix, page 152.
issue of emancipation, and that opinions were completely divided. He stated further that truth could not be predicated upon two opposing concepts of the problem. The chief affirmation of Lincoln was his belief that if God revealed his will to others, God would also reveal his will to him. Furthermore, Lincoln stated his position clearly by maintaining that if he learned the will of God he would obey it; thus informing the delegation that, in his opinion, the time was not ready to order an emancipation.

A fundamental problem confronts the church at this juncture. Does the church assume that it possesses an exclusive right to interpret the will of God? Does the formation of church resolutions imply that the church has the answer to the problems of the nation? Do ministers have a right to assume that they are superior in their "calling" and in their evaluation of right and wrong? The crux of this problem has not been adequately confronted by organized Christianity. It is a vital issue and the facts are explicit in the case of Lincoln's attitude.

The Chicago ministers assumed, by virtue of their church status, that they were more capable of interpreting the will of God than Lincoln. Lincoln objected to their assumption and informed the ministers that he had the same access to God's will that they had. Thus Lincoln, a non-church member, held the theory that all men, whether in the church or outside the church, were capable of learning and doing the will of God. The evidence in the case, as based on human experience, was on the side of Lincoln. Lincoln stood in the tradition of all men who rely upon individual conscience.
It should be noted that Lincoln was not interested in the government control of the churches during the war. He believed that the right of individual conscience also applied to the churches. In his order to Major General Curtis, dated January 2, 1863, he stated that the United States government must not "undertake to run the churches."\(^1\) However, as he pointed out, the government would check the actions of an individual or a church if they were dangerous to the safety of the nation.

In an endorsement of a letter pertaining to General James Bowen's order that the keys and property of St. Paul's Church in New Orleans be turned over to the army, Lincoln further revealed his attitude toward the church on March 15, 1864, by stating that the government would take church property only if needed for military purposes.\(^2\) The same attitude was expressed regarding a church at Memphis, Tennessee, May 13, 1864.\(^3\)

Finally, his response to the Methodists indicates his general attitude of the churches supporting the war. His statement, dated May 18, 1864, was a pronouncement of God's blessings upon all churches.\(^4\)

From the foregoing evidence, it is apparent that Lincoln recognized the institutional value of the church even though he could not identify himself with it as a church member.

B. ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH TOWARD LINCOLN

Institutional Christianity during the life of Lincoln did not understand, although it generally recognized, the nature of the man.

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\(^1\) Basler, op. cit., VI, p. 34.
\(^2\) Ibid., VII, p. 247.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 339.
\(^4\) Ibid., pp. 349-50.
The churches could not understand why Lincoln, in view of his good qualities of character, refused to join a church. They recognized and approved his church attendance, and they were aware that he ignored church membership, but they did not understand his reasons. In general, the churches approved of the last two decades of his life; however, as late as 1846 there is evidence that, at least a minority element, were skeptical of his religious views.

1. Unfavorable attitude. During the Congressional campaign of 1846, Lincoln and Peter Cartwright opposed each other for a seat in Congress. Cartwright was a frontier preacher of the Methodist faith and was skeptical of Lincoln's views toward religion. An incident occurred during the campaign that probably increased Cartwright's suspicion of Lincoln. ¹ Lincoln attended one of Cartwright's religious meetings, and according to the tradition, refused to "stand up" when Cartwright requested everyone to stand if they desired "to lead a new life, to give their hearts to God, and go to heaven." ² Cartwright then asked everyone to stand who did not want to go to hell. Observing that Lincoln had remained seated, Cartwright asked him where he was going. In response, Lincoln stated that he had not anticipated the lack of religious solemnity that had developed in the meeting, and that he was going to Congress.

Lincoln was aware of the rumors being spread that he was an infidel; therefore, he published a reply written, July 31, 1846:

A charge having got into circulation in some of the neighborhoods

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¹ Sandburg, ABY, pp. 216-17.
² Loc. cit.
of this District, in substance that I am an open scoffer at Christianity, I have by the advice of some friends concluded to notice the subject in this form. That I am not a member of any Christian Church, is true; but I have never denied truth of the Scriptures; and I have never spoken with intentional disrespect of religion in general, or of any denomination of Christians in particular. It is true that in early life I was inclined to believe in what I understand is called the "Doctrine of Necessity"—that is, that the human mind is impelled to action, or held in rest by some power, over which the mind itself has no control; and I have sometimes (with one, two or three, but never publicly) tried to maintain this opinion in argument. The habit of arguing thus however, I have, entirely left off for more than five years. And I add here, I have always understood this same opinion to be held by several of the Christian denominations. The foregoing, is the whole truth, briefly stated, in relation to myself, upon the subject.

I do not think I could myself, be brought to support a man for office, whom I knew to be an open enemy of, and scoffer at, religion. Leaving the higher matter of eternal consequences, between him and his Maker, I still do not think any man has the right thus to insult the feelings, and injure the morals, of the community in which he may live. If, then, I was guilty of such conduct, I should blame no man who should condemn me for it; but I do blame those, whoever they may be, who falsely put such a charge in circulation against me.¹

There was no doubt in Lincoln’s mind that Cartwright, and perhaps others, had circulated the charges of infidelity. In a letter accompanying the handbill, dated August 11, 1846, Lincoln said of Cartwright: "Cartwright, never heard me utter a word in any way indicating my opinions on religious matters, in his life."²

At any rate, the published reply of Lincoln is an indication that an unfavorable attitude existed toward him. The extent of the attitude was not widespread because Lincoln received 6,340 votes to Cartwright’s 4,829; and there is no further evidence of a continuation of this particular attitude, that is, the charge of infidelity, against Lincoln.

The unfavorable attitude of the majority of the Springfield clergy

¹ Basler, op. cit., I, p. 382.
² Ibid., p. 384.
was reflected, however, relative to the nomination of Lincoln for the presidency. In 1860 Newton Bateman was superintendent of schools in Illinois. According to Bateman, Lincoln came to his office to discuss the progress of the campaign, especially concerning the canvassed votes of the Springfield clergy. After looking at the list, which was actually a poll taken relative to the way each citizen intended to vote, Lincoln noted that only three out of twenty-three ministers specified intentions to vote for him.\(^1\) Bateman maintained that Lincoln was "full of sadness" at the opposition of the clergy; subsequently, Lincoln turned to him and said:

Here are twenty-three, ministers, of different denominations, and all of them are against me but three; and here are a great many prominent members of the churches, a very large majority of whom are against me. Mr. Bateman, I am not a Christian--God knows I would be one--but I have carefully read the Bible, and I do not so understand this book; (and he drew from his bosom a pocket New Testament). These men know that I am for freedom in the territories, freedom everywhere as far as the Constitution and laws will permit, and that my opponents are for slaver. They know this, and yet, with this book in their hands, in the light of which human bondage cannot live a moment, they are going to vote against me. I do not understand it at all.\(^2\)

There was more to follow, according to Bateman, concerning Lincoln's statements about Christ being God; however, this aspect of the story will be treated later.

For the purpose of analyzing the attitude of the Springfield church people toward Lincoln, a few facts should be pointed out. Holland first used the story as Bateman related it to him. Then, Lamon, following the opinion of Herndon, attempted to refute the story by insisting that

\(^1\) Holland, LAL, pp. 236-39.  
\(^2\) Lot. cit. Note Bateman's full account in Appendix, page 142.
it was "so inconsistent with Mr. Lincoln's whole character, that it must be rejected as altogether incredible." $^1$ Herndon granted that Lincoln discussed the attitude of the preachers toward him with Bateman, but he refused to believe that Lincoln pulled a Bible from his pocket. $^2$

Herndon also rejected the idea that Lincoln had referred to Christ as God. $^3$

The opinion of Barton was that Bateman, Herndon, Holland, and Lamon were relatively sincere men in their attempt to portray Lincoln; nevertheless, Bateman and Holland could be trusted in their reputation for veracity, whereas, there was doubt concerning the veracity of Herndon and Lamon. $^4$

The problem is still an open issue. No evidence has been discovered to refute Bateman's story; however, a careful search of Lincoln's writings by this investigation shows that, as far as his records are available, not a single statement can be used to support Bateman's claim that Lincoln believed Christ was God. In chapter five this latter issue will be analyzed more fully.

That Lincoln was opposed in some quarters of the church is evident. It is apparent that he held religious views that were not in accordance with the orthodoxy of the time. He knew that the ministers of Springfield voted against him, and that their objections were based on the rumors that he was a deist—or worse, an infidel. $^5$ However, there is

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1 Lamon, LL, pp. 499-00.
2 Herndon, LL, p. 377.
3 Ibid., p. 356.
4 Barton, op. cit., p. 120.
5 Basler, op. cit., I, p. 320.
no evidence that Lincoln was unduly disturbed by the unfavorable attitude of the church.

2. **Favorable attitude.** The favorable attitude of organized Christianity toward Lincoln was reflected by the sermons preached after his death. Jones estimates that ten thousand sermons were delivered in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain "during that season of sorrow."¹

The ministers who eulogized Lincoln were contemporary with him. After granting that these ministers were influenced by a deep sense of the tragedy that swept the nation, and that funeral sermons emphasize the virtues of the deceased, yet there was a genuine feeling of love and respect reflected in their sermons.

Monaghan's "An Analysis of Lincoln's Funeral Sermons" (1945), states that four hundred and four sermons have been preserved. His analysis of the sermons shows that the ministers exhibited a considerable amount of vindictiveness toward the southern people.² He states:

Heading the list of vindictiveness toward the Confederacy, the Unitarians' collection of published sermons show 80 per cent to have been unrelentingly opposed to any clemency for the conquered South. The Lutheran and Congregational sermons were 75 per cent and 74 per cent vindictive. Next came the Presbyterians with 62 per cent. The Episcopalians, Methodists, and Baptists were evenly split, fifty-fifty, for and against lenient reconstruction, if the sermons that have survived may be used as an index. The Hebrews, Catholics, and Quakers stood aloof from the political imbroglio, publishing few sermons on the subject. Those that are preserved breathe condolence without vituperation.³

¹ Jones, op. cit., p. 112.
² Sixty-two sermons and eulogies have been studied in this investigation.
³ Monaghan, "ALFS," p. 4.
The sermon of Charles H. Brigham, pastor of the First Congregational Church, Taunton, Massachusetts, reveals the typical vindictiveness:

It will teach all classes the foolishness of attempting to conciliate traitors by dealing gently with their offenses, and meeting them halfway when they have come into our power, our murdered President, in opposition to the advice of many of his wisest friends, who knew these Southern traitors and their spirit, who had been their associates, was disposed to treat them kindly, to overlook their crimes, to grant them amnesty, to believe that they might be won back to honor and loyalty.¹

O. H. Dutton, pastor of the Second Congregational Church in Holyoke, Massachusetts, preached the opposite view:

God forbid that we should seem to say anything to inflame the passions of men, or to excite desires for a carnal vengeance! Rather would we bring home to the consciences of all men the question, Am I guiltless in this matter?²

Across the nation the conflict was waged as the mingled emotions of the people reacted to Lincoln's death. The ethical attitude of the President toward the South was tolerance and understanding; yet the preachers, in general, were vindictive.

However, it should be noted that the virtues of Lincoln were emphasized even by those ministers who were the most vindictive. On the whole, the sermons reflected a genuine love and respect as it has been pointed out. Gurley, Lincoln's pastor, summed up the general attitude that was favorable toward him: "Probably no man since the days of Washington was ever so deeply and firmly imbedded and enshrined in the very hearts of the people as Abraham Lincoln."³ Yet Gurley and the majority of the ministers deplored the fact that Lincoln was killed while

¹ Spencer, Lincolniana, p. 11.
² Ibid., pp. 79-80.
³ Tilton and Co., SAL, p. 20.
attending a theater. The theater was looked upon by the church of Lincoln's day as an evil, and it was a shock to the church people to learn that a theater was the site of his death. The fact that Lincoln enjoyed the theater is evidence of his unorthodoxy relative to entertainment and recreation.

While the foregoing approach to the problem of the attitude of the church toward Lincoln is a study of the ministers' sermons, there is another area of investigation that should be mentioned. Briefly, the denominations approved of Lincoln's religious fast days and the thanksgiving proclamations which he recommended to the nation. Moreover, there was definite approval of his emancipation order in freeing the slaves. When he issued an order for Sabbath observance in the armed forces the churches were especially gratified. The churches also approved his dependence upon prayer and when they were requested by the President to pray for him and the nation the response was unanimous.

The character of Lincoln elicited the approval of the churches because of its human greatness. Church people regretted that he was not a church member, but the qualities of his life convinced them of the deep spiritual nature of his soul. Moreover, the common lay people of the churches who were less concerned with theology than the ministers, saw in Lincoln a living example of Christianity and they were not concerned with whether or not he adhered to a specific church creed.

1 Basler, op. cit., V, pp. 497-98.
C. REFUSAL TO JOIN THE CHURCH

The preceding investigation has established the fact that Lincoln was not a church member. In 1846 he admitted that he was not a member of the Christian church. Furthermore, there is no evidence that he joined a church after he moved to Washington. If he had any intention of joining a church after the Civil War, the bullet of John Wilkes Booth ended that hope. However, there is no indication that he planned to become a church member. The testimony of his Washington pastor, Phineas D. Gurley, published in "Scribner's Monthly" (July, 1873) is not sufficient evidence that Lincoln planned "to make a profession of religion."¹ Lincoln attended Gurley's church and he had ample opportunity to make a "profession" and join the church; however, there is no concrete evidence that he felt the need to identify himself formally with the church. It is inconceivable, in view of his religious nature, that he felt a need of church membership, as if the specific act of joining a church would insure the salvation of his soul.

The crux of the problem, therefore, is to account for his refusal to become a church member. Why did he attend church and yet not identify himself with it? The evidence of this investigation has established the fact that he accepted the practical value of organized Christianity. He recognized the existence of institutional Christianity, and he did not advocate that these institutions should be destroyed. What were his reasons, then, for remaining outside the church?

¹ Johnson, ALC, p. 171.
1. **Exclusiveness of the church.** The preceding investigation has shown the exclusive aspects of organized Christianity. The religious background of American Christianity was an inheritance of the theological and institutional aspects of the European churches. From the very beginning of Christianity the divisive element appeared among the followers of Jesus. With the organization of the churches the spirit of Jesus the Christ became crystalized, or molded into specific doctrinal and organizational forms; and each church set itself up as the absolute norm of Christianity.

In America, due to the frontier conditions that fostered a spirit of individualism, the divisive aspect of organized Christianity became more evident than it had been in Europe. Each denomination was an exclusive unit of Christianity; each denomination believed that it was the true "visible church" on earth. It has been demonstrated that if frontier revivalism engendered increased interest in religion, it also fostered a divisive spirit among the denominations. Each church contended with the other and Christian fellowship was contained within each particular branch of organized Christianity.

Doctrinal content, church polity, and sacramental differences among the denominations were emphasized. Individuals who joined a denomination were expected to adhere to the doctrinal content and disciplinary forms of the denomination. The confession of faith represented by the Pigeon Church in Indiana was an example of the exclusiveness of denominationalism during Lincoln's life. Moreover, the same trend continues in the present age.

Lincoln grew up in the midst of a religious environment that
exhibited the exclusiveness of the church. He was also a product of the American frontier in the sense of experience; he knew the meaning of self-reliance and the right of individual conscience.

Evidence of Lincoln's reaction to the exclusiveness of the church is substantiated on good authority. After the death of Lincoln, Henry C. Deming, a Congressman from Connecticut, delivered a memorial address on June 8, 1865. The following statement of Lincoln was given in reply to Deming's inquiry concerning the reasons why he was not a church member:

I have never united myself to any church, because I have found difficulty in giving my assent, without mental reservation, to the long, complicated statements of Christian doctrine which characterize their articles of belief and confessions of faith. When any church will inscribe over its altars, as its sole qualification for membership, the Saviour's condensed statement of the substance of both law and gospel, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself," that church will I join with all my heart and all my soul.¹

According to Deming's quotation of Lincoln, the issue is squarely confronted. Lincoln could not accept the doctrinal emphasis of the church. The approach of the church was theological; the approach of Lincoln was ethical. The love of God and his fellow man was central in Lincoln's thought, and he could not understand why theological differences were emphasized by the churches as the conditions for church membership.

The second source that deals with the same opinion of Lincoln, and one that is independent from the first, is the account of Henry B. Rankin contained in his Reminiscences (1916).² Rankin, who knew Lincoln when he lived in New Salem, remembered that he had heard Lincoln's reply to a

¹ Barton, op. cit., pp. 244-45.
² Lot. cit.
question concerning the rumors that he was an infidel. Mrs. Rankin, mother of Henry, had asked Lincoln if he were an infidel and Lincoln had denied it; however, according to Lincoln's explanation of his religious views, it was apparent that he could not accept the orthodoxy of the church.

The third source relative to Lincoln's refusal to join the church is essentially the same as the first two citations. Gurley discussed the question of church membership with Lincoln and concluded that he did not accept all the doctrines of the Presbyterian church. Furthermore, according to Gurley, Lincoln stated that:

"if all that I am asked to respond to is what our Lord said were the two great commandments, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and mind and soul and strength, and my neighbor as myself, why, I aim to do that."

Thus three sources substantiate with reasonable certainty the chief reason why Lincoln never became a church member. He was not willing to compromise his intellectual integrity concerning church doctrine. He did not admit, nor did he justify, the primacy of theology over ethics. Salvation to him was not dependent, in any sense, upon church membership.

Finally, he knew from personal experience that the essence of Christianity was not confined to institutional forms. Christianity was to him a matter of deep significance in terms of personal experience—an experience based, not on doctrinal concepts, but on ethical love.

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2 Barton, *loc. cit.*
CHAPTER IV

MATURE RELIGIOUS FAITH OF LINCOLN

The investigation of the relationship of Lincoln to the church has indicated the attitude he displayed toward organized Christianity. He attended various churches, yet he was not a church member. What was his concept of religion as related to Christianity? What were his views concerning God, Jesus, the Bible, and human nature?

Lincoln was not a theologian; however, there are evidences among his writings that indicate his views concerning the basic religious issues of life. He probably never worked out a systematic approach to his religious faith; yet his writings reveal that he gave considerable attention to the matter. The following chapter presents the evidences relative to the religious aspects of his faith.

A. GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

1. Providence of God. There is no proof that Lincoln disbelieved the existence of God. Herndon always portrayed his unorthodoxy in comparison with orthodox Christianity, but he did not depict him as an atheist. Herndon implied that Lincoln, during his moments of melancholy, did border between theism and atheism; however, he affirmed that Lincoln "was a deeply-religious man at all times and places, in spite of his transient doubts."¹ Concerning infidelity, Herndon said:

Mr. Lincoln moved to this city 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. Mr. Lincoln here found other works,--Hume, Gibbon, and others,--
and drank them in: he made no secret of his views; no concealment of
his religion. He boldly avowed himself an infidel.  

Herndon was not always trustworthy in his account of the Lincoln
story; in fact, the following quotation also shows that he was often in-
consistent:

... Mr. Lincoln said as little about his religious opinions as
possible, especially if he failed to coincide with the orthodox
world.  

It should be noted that the term "infidel" was a word used to
classify the individual who did not accept the religious views of the
Christian orthodoxy of the time. Herndon's views of religion were un-
orthodox; subsequently, he was termed as an "infidel." Apparently, there
was a partial basis of fact in Herndon's allegations that Lincoln was not
orthodox in his religious beliefs; nevertheless, there is no evidence that
Lincoln viewed religion exactly as Herndon. The reply of Lincoln to the
current charges of infidelity in 1846 shows that the term was used against
him in the election campaign.

The "Doctrine of Necessity" phrase in the 1846 statement shows that
Herndon was referring to Lincoln's previous concept of human freedom when
he said:

There are no accidents in my [referring to Lincoln] philosophy.
Every effect must have its cause. The past is the cause of the
present, and the present will be the cause of the future. All these
are links in the endless chain stretching from the finite to the
infinite.  

According to Lincoln, however, he had changed his views in 1846
by no longer inclining to believe in absolute determinism.

1 Lemon, loc. cit.
2 Herndon, op. cit., p. 354.
3 Lot. cit.
It is not necessary to present each instance in which Lincoln referred to God; however, there are definite terms that he employed that revealed the religious nature of his mind. In his speech before the Springfield Temperance Society, February 22, 1842, he referred to God as, "an over-ruling Providence."

In his reply to the charges of infidelity, August 15, 1846, he used the word, "Maker."

A letter to George Ashmun, May 23, 1860, shows the designation, "Divine Providence.

Johnston's study of the different appellations used by Lincoln in reference to God lists forty-nine designations.

While no great importance can be attached to a mere enumeration of Lincoln's references to God, yet the natural ease with which he mentioned God indicates his spiritual intimacy with Him.

The following quotation from his farewell remarks made when he left Springfield, February 11, 1861, was characteristic of his religious faith:

"Without the assistance of that Divine Being, who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him, who can go with me, and remain with you and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well."

Thus Lincoln recognized Washington's dependence on God and he made it public that, he too, would rely on the assistance of God. A study of this speech shows that Lincoln's reliance upon the "assistance of God" was a matter of personal cooperation with God's will. The speech cannot be harmonized with Calvinism because Lincoln indicates his belief that

1 Basler, op. cit., I, p. 275.
2 Ibid., p. 382.
3 Ibid., IV, p. 52.
4 Johnson, ALC, pp. 215-17.
5 Basler, IV, p. 190.
man's actions depend in terms of good fruit, not upon Divine election, but upon man's freedom to accept or reject the will of God. Lincoln knew that if he failed to seek God's will and his assistance, he would fail to perform the task of the presidency. He was not concerned whether, in the Calvinistic sense, he was "in grace" or "outside of grace." Moreover, he knew that the ability of God to help him depended upon his own effort to permit God to help him.

However, the foregoing evaluation of one specific statement made by Lincoln is only one aspect of the problem. Lincoln believed that God could be approached through prayer and that his will could be known; yet there were times when he was perplexed about the matter. The following quotation was, according to Nicolay and Hay, "not written to be seen of men;" however, it illustrates the perplexity of Lincoln regarding God's will toward the war. It was entitled, "Meditation on the Divine Will," and was dated probably, September 2, 1862:

The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both may be, and one must be wrong. God can not be for, and against the same thing at the same time. In the present civil war it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party—and yet the human instrumentalities, working just as they do, are of the best adaption to effect His purpose. I am almost ready to say this is probably true—that God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet. By his mere quiet power, on the minds of the now contestants. He could have either saved or destroyed the Union without a human contest. Yet the contest began. And having begun He could give the final victory to either side any day. Yet the contest proceeds.1

The only way that Lincoln could reconcile the war to his concept of God's Providence was to place the responsibility of the war on man, not God. At the very point where he is almost willing to admit that God wills

1 Basler, op. cit., V, pp. 403-04.
everything that humanity experiences, Lincoln was confronted with what he termed "human instrumentalities, working just as they do," and the idea is implied that God uses the free actions of man as the "best adaption to effect His purpose." Lincoln believed that God had the power to stop the war if He wanted to; however, since man was free to begin the war, God would use the war in accordance with His will to achieve His purpose. Thus the Providence of God is conceived as a condition in which man solves his problems through human experience. The "quiet power" of God is an influence that operates on the minds of men not to force them as slaves, but to persuade them as free men, to accept and do His will.

The idea that God was using the war to affect His purpose continued in Lincoln's mind. He wrote to Albert G. Hodges, editor of the Frankfort, Kentucky, Commonwealth, April 4, 1864:

I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of three years struggle the nation's condition is not what either party, or any man devised, or expected. God alone can claim it. Whither it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills also that we of the North as well as you of the South, shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein a new cause to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God.

Lincoln recognized that the events of human experience, on the individual and national level, were beyond the immediate control of himself and the nation as well. The war had created conditions not anticipated by either side of the conflict. There were signs that the North was winning the war, and if the North achieved victory, the institution of slavery was defeated. The will of God was to Lincoln the controlling factor, not that He forced the war to continue, but that the

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1 Basler, op. cit., VII, pp. 281-82.
war was allowed to continue until the conflict would be resolved. By this it is meant that God did not ordain the war to begin, but once it began it was God's will that the war should run its course.

Without extending this view too far, it should be noted that Lincoln was also Calvinistic in his concept of the sovereignty of God. Furthermore, the weight of the evidence seems to indicate that the Calvinistic background of his early life continued to influence his mature years. The approach of the investigation thus far has been to point out certain tendencies in his philosophy that were anti-Calvinistic. However, his own testimony substantiates the conclusion that he tended strongly toward Calvinism in his view of Providence. Note his letter to Eliza P. Gurney, September 4, 1864:

\[\text{The purposes of the Almighty are perfect, and must prevail, though we erring mortals may fail to accurately perceive them in advance. We hoped for a happy termination of this terrible war long before this; but God knows best, and has ruled otherwise. We shall yet acknowledge His wisdom and our own error therein. Meanwhile we must work earnestly in the best light He gives us, trusting that so working still conduces to the great ends He ordains. Surely He intends some great good to follow this mighty convulsion, which no mortal could make, and no mortal could stay.}\]

The above excerpt does not make Lincoln a Calvinist in every respect, but it does indicate clearly his belief in the overruling Providence of God. On the other hand, it does not mean that Lincoln absolved in his mind the responsibility of man in the war.

The same Calvinistic tendency was reflected strongly in his second inaugural address, delivered March 4, 1865. Until his death

1 Basler, op. cit., VII, p. 535.
2 Ibid., VIII, pp. 332-33.
six weeks later there is no indication that he had changed in this respect.

Another aspect of his view of God and the universe seems to show that he believed some things are "accidental" in human experience. In a letter of condolence to Queen Victoria, dated February 1, 1862, (death of Prince Albert), he said:

Accidents, however, incidental to all States, and passions, common to all nations, often tend to disturb the harmony so necessary and so proper between the two countries, and to convert them into enemies.

... commending Your Majesty and the Prince Royal, the Heir Apparent, and all your afflicted family to the tender mercies of God, I remain Your Good Friend.

This does not mean that Lincoln believed events occurred without the knowledge of God, or without to some extent the will of God in the event; however, the term "accidents" indicates that Lincoln was searching for a word that would explain certain events which he could not understand.

Finally, the observation is reasonably substantiated that although Lincoln tended toward a Calvinistic interpretation concerning the rule of Providence, yet he left room for the idea of free human responsibility.

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS THE CHRIST

What was the attitude of Lincoln toward Jesus the Christ? Did he believe that Jesus was God? What was his concept regarding the nature of Jesus? Did he believe that Jesus the Christ was his personal Savior? What was the significance of Christian ethics to Lincoln? These and other related questions are pertinent to the Lincoln story.

1 Basler, op. cit., V, p. 117.
As it has been pointed out, Lincoln was not a theologian and his writings are not directed specifically to expositions of religious subjects. There are few references in his writings relating to Jesus, and these references are inadequate as source material in forming a definite conclusion regarding Lincoln's view of him. It is impossible to discover a clearly defined Christology of Lincoln. Nevertheless, it is important to investigate the problem because Lincoln exemplified in his life the basic spirit and example of Jesus.

1. Christology. According to Newton Bateman, Lincoln once made a statement that "Christ is God." The exact wording of the alleged sentence is: "I know I am right because I know that liberty is right, for Christ teaches it, and Christ is God."\(^1\) The circumstances of the Bateman incident have already been presented in the foregoing research.

The basic problem that confronting the investigation at this juncture is to determine if the alleged words of Lincoln can be corroborated by any other similar statements or by his own writings. To discuss pro and con the position of Bateman versus Herndon is an approach that cannot resolve the issue. Both men knew Lincoln intimately and they had different opinions of his religious faith. Bateman was orthodox; Herndon was unorthodox. Bateman was satisfied that Lincoln believed Christ was God; Herndon was disturbed by the assumption. What do the writings of Lincoln indicate?

The first reference that Lincoln made to Jesus was in his temperance address before the Springfield Temperance Society, February 22, 1842.

\(^1\) Holland, op. cit., pp. 236-39.
Lincoln was discussing the Christian's responsibility toward the drunkard:

"But," say some, "we are no drunkards; and we shall not acknowledge ourselves such by joining a reformed drunkard's society, whatever our influence might be." Surely no Christian will adhere to this objection. If they believe, as they profess, that Omnipotence condescended to take on himself the form of sinful man, and, as such, to die an ignominious death for their sakes, surely they will not refuse submission to the infinitely lesser condescension, for the temporal, and perhaps eternal salvation, of a large, erring, and unfortunate class of their own fellow creatures. Nor is the condescension very great.

From this it is clear that Lincoln was familiar with the orthodox Christology of his time; however, the reference does not prove that he subscribed to the doctrine that God took on "himself the form of sinful man." In fact, the phrase, "if they believe," indicates that he did not include himself within the category; however, it may have been a form of expression that Lincoln used to emphasize his point.

In his speech at Niagara Falls (only a fragment), September, 1843, he said:

It calls up the indefinite past. When Columbus first sought this continent—when Christ suffered on the cross—when Moses led Israel through the Red-Sea—nay, even when Adam first came from the hand of his Maker—then as now, Niagara was roaring here.

This passage is not particularly significant except that Lincoln indicates that he was familiar with the Bible. His use of the word, "Christ," does indicate that he generally referred to Jesus in that way. The use of "Christ" by profane individuals, for example, has no relevance to Christology.

Another passage contained in one of his debates with Douglas at Chicago, July 10, 1858, is more significant. Douglas had said that

1 Basler, op. cit., I, pp. 277-78.
2 Ibid., II, p. 10.
Lincoln was a "poor hand to quote Scripture," and Lincoln replied:

I will try it again, however. It is said in one of the admonitions of the Lord, "As your Father in Heaven is perfect, be ye also perfect." The Savior, I suppose, did not expect that any human creature could be perfect as the Father in Heaven; but He said, "As your Father in Heaven is perfect, be ye also perfect." He set that up as a standard, and he who did most towards reaching that standard, attained the highest degree of moral perfection. So I say in relation to the principle that all men are created equal, let it be as nearly reached as we can. If we cannot give freedom to every creature, let us do nothing that will impose slavery upon any other creature.1

The crux of this passage is a definite reference to Jesus as a human example of moral perfection; not absolute perfection, but the highest degree. There is no intimation that Christ was God in this passage. Christ is plainly represented as a human being who achieved only by degree a character of relative perfection. Moreover, Lincoln emphasized that if the "Savior" attained a high degree of moral perfection, then the same could be achieved relative to the issue of slavery. Humanity should try to reach perfection by developing higher moral standards concerning the institution of slavery—that none should "impose slavery upon any other creature." Lincoln would have been banished as a heretic at the Council of Nicea (325 A. D.).

Another reference was made by Lincoln during his speech at Springfield, July 17, 1858, when he related the parable of the lost sheep and employed the term, "Saviour."2 There is nothing significant about this reference.

In reference to his attitude toward the ministers of the South who justified slavery on religious grounds, Lincoln referred to Jesus

1 Basler, op. cit., II, p. 501.
2 Ibid., pp. 510-11.
and the Golden Rule, May 30, 1864:

When, a year or two, those professedly holy men of the South, met in the semblance of prayer and devotion, and, in the name of Him who said "As ye would all men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them" appealed to the Christian world to aid them in doing to a whole race of men, as they would have no man do unto themselves, to my thinking, they contemned and insulted God and His church, far more than did Satan when he tempted the Saviour with the Kingdoms of the earth. The devil's attempt was no more false, and far less hypocritical. But let me forbear, remembering it is also written "Judge not, lest ye be judged."  

This passage provides an insight into Lincoln's understanding of Christian ethics. He could not reconcile the attitude of the southern churches' religious defense of slavery. According to his view of Christian ethics, Lincoln believed that slavery was morally wrong.

Another reference to Jesus is noted in Lincoln's acceptance of a Bible presented to him by the Baltimore Negroes, September 7, 1864:

All the good the Saviour gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it. To you I return my most sincere thanks for the very elegant copy of the great Book of God which you present.  

It is evident that Lincoln believed that Jesus was the "Saviour" in the sense that he was the living example of the fundamental principles of the Bible. This does not mean that Jesus was merely the sum total of Biblical principles; rather that he exemplified the principles in a living way that made him greater than mere principles embodied in a book.

Herndon's allegation that Lincoln never referred to Jesus as "Christ" is sustained in the sense that Lincoln used the term with constraint. Lincoln often quoted the sayings of Jesus, but there are few instances where he referred specifically to him.

1 Basler, op. cit., VII, p. 368.
2 Ibid., p. 542.
What was the view of Lincoln toward Jesus Christ? There are conclusive evidences that he believed in Jesus and endeavored to live the principles embodied in his teachings. Bateman maintained that Lincoln believed in the orthodox concept of the divinity of Christ; Herndon affirmed that he denied Christ's divinity. The testimony of hearsay evidence is reliable up to a point, but it cannot be used as absolute evidence to determine the correct solution to the problem. The testimony of other people who knew Lincoln is about equally divided and it is not necessary to this research to weigh each case pro and con. The veracity of one group over against the other is equally proportioned.

The evidence of Lincoln's writings is that he rejected the orthodox theological view of Christology. The evidence indicates that the doctrines concerning the matter of Jesus Christ being "very God of very God" did not hold a great deal of interest for Lincoln. The important issue for Lincoln was that Jesus was a human being, and as such, was the highest human example of ethical perfection. In this sense Lincoln believed that Jesus was divine—a divinity that was achieved through ethical relationships with God and man under the inspiring influence of God's Holy Spirit. He believed that Jesus was the human essence of ethical love, and in this sense as in no other, Lincoln was a follower of Jesus. The idea that Lincoln believed that Jesus was "God" is not substantiated by his writings. His faith in Jesus was not based upon theological speculation concerning his origin or his "divine" nature, but upon the life of Jesus. Thus Lincoln accepted Christianity as represented by Jesus, not by the church.
2. **Christian ethics.** The preceding section of the research has presented several evidences of Lincoln's concept relative to Christian ethics; however, a few additional specific instances will help to illustrate still further the nature of his religious faith.

The issue of slavery was the area in which Lincoln exhibited his understanding and practice of ethics. He had seen slaves all his life. He was probably troubled in conscience especially after his trips down the Mississippi when he first came to Illinois. In a letter to Joshua F. Speed, August 24, 1855, he referred specifically to this matter:

> In 1841 you and I had together a tedious low-water trip, on a Steam Boat from Louisville to St. Louis. You may remember, as well as I do, that from Louisville to the mouth of the Ohio there were, on board, ten or a dozen slaves, shackled together with irons. That sight was a continual torment to me; and I see something like it every time I touch the Ohio, or any other slave-border.1

Lincoln's attitude toward slavery was an evolvement of an awakening conscience on one hand, and the problem of knowing how to deal with it on the other. His speech at Bloomington, Illinois, September 4, 1858, indicates the maturity of his ethical attitude:

> Now, when by all these means you have succeeded in dehumanizing the negro; when you have put him down, and made it forever impossible for him to be but as the beasts of the field; when you have extinguished his soul, and placed him where the ray of hope is blown out in darkness like that which broods over the spirits of the damned; are you quite sure the demon which you have roused will not turn and rend you?2

This same ethical attitude was reflected by Lincoln in his analysis of pro-slavery theology. A fragment has been preserved which

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1 Basler, *op. cit.*, II, p. 320.
2 Ibid., III, p. 95.
depicts his ethical emphasis over against the theological presuppositions that were employed to justify slavery. In refuting Biblical references as a precedent for the justification of slavery, Lincoln observed that the Golden Rule was the only authority which should be appealed to in deciding the issue. No man ought to enslave another if he is unwilling to be enslaved himself. On this ethical basis Lincoln concluded that slavery was not good for any man.

Did Lincoln believe that the Negro was equal to the white man in every respect? The following excerpt quoted from his sixth debate with Douglas at Quincy, Illinois, October 13, 1858:

... there is no reason in the world why the negro is not entitled to all the rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence--the right of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. I hold that he is as much entitled to these as the white man. I agree with Judge Douglas that he is not my equal in many respects, certainly not in color--perhaps not in intellectual and moral endowments; but in the right to eat the bread without leave of anybody else which his own hand earns, he is my equal and the equal of Judge Douglas, and the equal of every other man.

It must be noted that Lincoln possessed a mental reservation relative to granting absolute equality to the Negro. He was undecided concerning the technique of political freedom during the pre-civil war years, but it is clear that if he had lived he would have attempted to free the Negro in every political and economic respect. Relative to absolute social equality, however, he never advocated inter-marriage or complete fraternalization. His main consideration, and it was the crux of his debates with Douglas, was that the Negro should have the right of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." In fact, the problem of the extension of slavery hinged over an interpretation of the Declaration

1 See Appendix, p. 153.
2 Basler, op. cit., III, p. 240
of Independence. Douglas maintained that each state had the right to decide for itself whether or not slavery should exist. The idea that undergirded Douglas' reasoning was predicated on the assumption that the founding fathers only intended that the "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" should be applied to white men. If people wished to have slaves it was all right with him. Douglas attempted to keep the moral aspect of slavery out of the debates; Lincoln won the debates on this aspect. It should be said in defense of Douglas that he desired to have the slavery problem resolved as much as Lincoln did. Moreover, his belief in individual liberty was evident. Yet he was not willing to confront the problem on an ethical basis. The individual liberty he advocated was the liberty of the white man to continue the enslavement of the Negro; the liberty of the Negro deciding the question for himself was not considered. The phrase of Douglas, "consistent with the safety of society," was indicative of his desire to keep the Negro from getting out of hand and endangering the superior status of the white man.¹

Other examples of Lincoln's understanding of Christian ethics include the many cases of pardoning or minimizing the military sentences of court-martialed soldiers and officers of the armed forces.

One case involving Private Michael Delany, sentenced to be shot for desertion, shows the practical aspect of Lincoln's nature. On July 18, 1863, he ordered: "Let him fight instead of being shot."²

Another incident reveals the human qualities of the President under the stress of war. Regardless of the callousness that is usually

¹ Basler, op. cit., III, p. 217.
² Ibid., VI, p. 335.
engendered by war the humanity of Lincoln was evidenced, for example, on October 8, 1863, in a letter to Major General Meade:

I am appealed to in behalf of August Blittersdorf, at Mitchells Station, Va. to be shot to-morrow, as a deserter. I am unwilling for any boy under eighteen to be shot; and his father affirms that he is yet under sixteen.  

In addition to the pressing concern of war, Lincoln's humanity was extended to the Indians of the West. As a result of general bad relations between the white man and the Indians, 300 of the alleged Indian criminals had been sentenced by the Minnesota Military Commission to be executed. Lincoln requested a report on each Indian from the Military Commission and after studying the cases of alleged murder, rape, assault, and theft, he ordered that only thirty-nine of the 300 Indians were to be executed, December 6, 1862:

The other condemned prisoners you will hold subject to further orders, taking care that they neither escape, nor are subjected to any unlawful violence.  

Lincoln expressed the characteristic ethical approach of his life during the sixth debate with Douglas, October 13, 1858, at Quincy, Illinois: "It really hurts me very much to suppose that I have wronged anybody on earth."  

Thus ethics played the leading role in the life of Lincoln. He was not concerned with the philosophical or theological aspects of Christian ethics, nor is there any evidence that he made a distinction between "Christian" ethics and "non-Christian" ethics, if the latter

1 Basler, op. cit., VI, p. 506.  
2 Ibid., V, pp. 550-51.  
3 Ibid., III, p. 254.
is a distinctive reality. Lincoln knew the Bible and the teachings of Jesus. He was a man of prayer and the genuineness of his communion with God cannot be doubted. The fact that he treated people the way in which he himself would have liked to have been treated signifies: he loved God and his fellowmen.

C. IMPORTANCE OF THE BIBLE

The Bible was important to Lincoln; of this there can be no question. Most of his major speeches and many of his letters contain references to the Bible—mainly the New Testament. He first became familiar with the Bible in his Kentucky home and it remained a companion book to him during his entire life. This does not mean that he was always accustomed to carrying a Bible in his pocket, but that he read it frequently is evident from his knowledge of it.

1. Faith and reason. The first evidence that appears from the writings of Lincoln that attaches importance to the Bible was his "Communication to the People of Sangamo County," March 9, 1832:

That every man may receive at least, a moderate education, and thereby be enabled to read the histories of his own and other countries, by which he may duly appreciate the value of our free institutions, appears to be an object of vital importance, even on this account alone, to say nothing of the advantages and satisfaction to be derived from all being able to read the scriptures and other works, both of a religious and moral nature, for themselves.¹

The importance of education was his main topic in this connection, but he placed the Bible in the top list of important books that should be read.

¹ Basler, op. cit., I, p. 8.
Four months before he married Mary Todd he wrote a letter to Joshua F. Speed and his familiarity with the Bible is reflected:

"Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" is my text just now.\(^1\)

These were the days of emotional conflict relative to his courtship with Mary Todd.

Barton quotes Daniel Kilham Dodge's *Abraham Lincoln: Evolution of His Literary Style* (1900), in effect:

In the whole of the twenty-five speeches, there were found twenty-two Biblical references, eight in the Old Testament and fourteen in the New.\(^2\)

Many of these references appear in the sources quoted in this research. It is not necessary to continue the quotations in this respect. However, it should be of interest to mention the testimony of a few people who were closely associated with Lincoln.

One of Lincoln's closest friends, Speed, relates that in 1864 he observed Lincoln reading the Bible. Speed made a comment suggesting that if Lincoln had recovered from his early skepticism, he (Speed) had not. According to Speed, Lincoln said:

You are wrong, Speed. Take all of this Book upon reason that you can, and the balance on faith, and you will live and die a happier man.\(^3\)

This is evidence that Lincoln combined reason with faith in his interpretation of the Bible. His training as a lawyer was conducive to a rational approach to the Bible. His speeches disclose the use of inductive and deductive reasoning.

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1 Basler, *op. cit.*, I, p. 289.
Warren reports from the testimony of Jay that on Lincoln's visit to Fortress Monroe, Virginia, May 4, 1862, he was seen in a secluded corner aboard ship "absorbed in reading his pocket edition of the New Testament."¹

Johnson quotes Noah Brooks: "He could repeat from memory whole chapters of Isaiah, the New Testament, and the Psalms."²

Lincoln's own statement to the Negroes of Baltimore when they presented him a Bible is definite evidence of his high regard:

But for it we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it.³

The mature thought of Lincoln was put into his reply to the Negroes. There is no evidence of any skepticism in these words regarding the significance of the Bible. He sincerely appreciated the gift and indicated his belief that it was the most important book mankind possessed. The first sentence of the above quotation concerning "right from wrong" if taken literally, would seem to say that Lincoln depended upon the Bible exclusively for religious guidance. Actually, Lincoln sought truth through all aspects of human experience; he did not mean to imply that non-Christian lands were without moral guidance simply because they did not have the Bible. He recognized that the principles of right living were contained in the Bible and that it served as a guide to this end.

To pursue this analysis further it should be noted that in 1858 Lincoln was deeply agitated concerning pro-slavery theology. In an

¹ "Lincoln Lore," No. 567.
² Johnson, op. cit., p. 149.
³ Basler, op. cit., VII, p. 542.
attempt to answer the problem in his own mind he referred to the Bible as follows:

The Almighty gives no audible answer to the question, and his revelation—the Bible—gives none—or, at most, none but such as admits of a squabble, as to its meaning.¹

Lincoln meant that the Bible did not provide a clear-cut answer to the institution of slavery; and that individuals could become involved in controversy by defending their respective views on the basis of Biblical "proof." Instead of appealing to the Bible directly to support his own interpretation of the "right and wrong" of slavery, Lincoln appealed to his own conscience as a guide in the matter. Thus it was the experience of life itself that served as a determining factor in Lincoln's ethical opposition to slavery. This is not to imply that Lincoln was oblivious to the ethics taught by Jesus, but it must be remembered that Jesus did not refer specifically to the issue of slavery.

Did Lincoln believe in Divine inspiration of the Bible? He probably did, but the evidence is not clear enough to establish what he meant when he referred to the Bible as God's revelation. It is apparent, however, that he did not interpret scripture literally. The underlying principle of words and events was always uppermost in his mind. Speed was probably right when he heard Lincoln refer to reason plus faith as his approach to the Bible.

Did Lincoln believe in the miracles recorded in the Bible? Again, the sources are adequate concerning his beliefs. But there is an indication of his view contained in his reply to the Chicago ministers when

they strongly demanded that he issue an emancipation. Lincoln's words concerning his effort to know the will of God are significant:

... it is my earnest desire to know the will of Providence in this matter. ... These are not, however, the days of miracles, and I suppose it will be granted that I am not to expect a direct revelation. I must study the plain physical facts of the case, ascertain what is possible and learn what appears to be wise and right.¹

It is possible that he believed miracles did occur in the "days of miracles," meaning that such events might have occurred in the time of Jesus or even during pre-Christian days. It is also implied that "direct revelation" was considered as a miracle in the same sense as natural or physical miracles such as turning water into wine--including the healing miracles ascribed to Jesus. From his own personal experience, however, Lincoln knew that "miracles" of this nature had not occurred for him.

Regardless of the fact that he may have prayed that God would grant him a "direct revelation," he was fully aware that he had to "study the plain physical facts of the case" in order to learn the "wise and right" decision. The evidence is on the side of reason--a rational approach to the problem of emancipation. Herndon was probably right when he maintained that Lincoln was skeptical of miracles. According to Herndon, Lincoln believed that "all things, both matter and mind, were governed by laws, universal, absolute, and eternal."²

From the evidence of Lincoln's writings it appears that the importance he attached to the Bible was undergirded by reason and faith. He did not place the primacy of faith above reason in the orthodox sense.

² Lamon, op. cit., pp. 492-97.
In this connection it is significant that he did not believe God's "elect" possessed a monopoly in the interpretation of the Bible. He was a man of faith and the evidence is conclusive that he believed his faith was as genuine and acceptable to God as the faith of church members. He endeavored to live in accordance with the great ethical principles set forth in the Bible and to this extent it was the rule of his faith; nevertheless, as Luther before him, his individual conscience was the final test of authority.

3. Sin and salvation. Under the Calvinistic training of his early life, Lincoln may have been under the impression that he was not counted among the "elect." However, there is no concrete evidence that he was ever disturbed over the issue.

That he recognized the existence of sin was apparent in his lecture on discoveries and inventions before the Young Men's Association at Bloomington, Illinois, April 6, 1858. Moreover, it is possible that he accepted the orthodox tradition that sin originated with Adam's "fall" and that the "curse of sin" was removed by Christ. Regardless of how much Calvinism he may have retained in this matter, he could not accept the idea of eternal punishment. The following account of Isaac Cogdal concerning his conversation with Lincoln about 1859 provides an insight into the problem:

Mr. Lincoln expressed himself in about these words: He did not nor could not believe in the endless punishment of anyone of the human race. He understood punishment for sin to be a Bible doctrine; that the punishment was parental in its object, aim, and design, and intended for the good of the offender; hence it must cease when justice was satisfied. He added that all that was lost by the transgression of Adam was made good by the sacrifice. And he added this

1 Basler, op. cit., II, pp. 440-41.
remark, that punishment being a provision of the gospel system, he was not sure but the world would be better if a little more punishment was preached by our ministers, and not so much pardon for sin.  

The latter portion of the testimony by Cogdal indicates that Lincoln may have forgot the "hell-fire and brimstone" preaching he had heard on the frontier. At any rate, the general impression of the testimony is that Lincoln was opposed to eternal punishment. The satisfaction theory of the atonement by Anselm (1033-1109), is apparent in the account; however, Lincoln was not content as Anselm and Calvin were, to assign the sinner to everlasting punishment. In addition, his leniency toward the court-martialed soldiers and other prisoners indicated his humanity toward life.

While there are no explicit references to this matter in his writings, the general tone of his statements indicate the reverence Lincoln held toward life. He was not a pacifist relative to war and he permitted individuals to be executed under the law, but in cases warranting merit he was merciful and just. The thought and actions of his life do not characterize him as harsh and condemmatory. The gospel of his life was based primarily on the New Testament teachings of Jesus. He rejected the "God of wrath" theory and in its place he sided with Jesus in affirming that God is love.

Salvation to Lincoln was a matter of ethical living under the quiet, guiding influence of God. It was not adherence to a correct church doctrine; it was an adherence to and practice of the Two Great Commandments.

1 Barton, op. cit., p. 287. Herndon was present at this meeting in Lincoln's Springfield office. He always affirmed Lincoln's belief in universal salvation.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION

A. Religious Background of Lincoln.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship of Abraham Lincoln to Christianity. In order to arrive at a conclusion relative to a problem of this nature the religious background of Lincoln was examined. A study of the history of organized Christianity in the United States revealed that from the beginning of the colonial period the Christian church was an important factor in the development of the nation. The influence of the church was felt throughout the whole of the new American civilization. When the people expanded the frontier the church was extended to keep pace with the population movement. While the majority of the people were not church members, many of the leaders of the people were identified with the church and their influence in the community and national life was important. In a general sense, the active leadership of the church effected the Christianization of the nation.

One hundred and eighty-nine years after the Plymouth settlement Lincoln was born in Kentucky. Kentucky was one of the new frontier states and the condition of life along the frontier was relatively primitive. The pioneers settled the wilderness with the ax, plow, and the gun; however, the Bible was also an integral part of their lives. By the time Lincoln was born the major denominational branches of the Christian church had been established in the frontier states and
territories. The Baptist denomination formed the immediate religious environment of Lincoln in Kentucky and Indiana. The Little Mount Church of Kentucky and the Pigeon Church of Indiana were the churches with which the Lincoln family was closely associated.

It has been established that the parents of Lincoln were church members and that they were active in the work of the church. He was nurtured in a home that was essentially Christian. The importance of the Bible was impressed upon him and the significance of the church was apparent in the example of his parents. There was no lack of religious training in his life from the standpoint of his home environment. Moreover, there was no lack of the influence of organized Christianity in his life.

The nature of the church influence upon Lincoln was manifested primarily in two related aspects: (1) The doctrinal emphasis on adherence to certain theological concepts; and (2) the emphasis on a personal religious experience. It has been shown that the theological aspects of the church were essentially Calvinistic. The Pigeon Church confession of faith illustrates this point. The inherited European Calvinistic theology was only slightly modified in the concept of it by the frontier church. This applied particularly to the Baptists, Presbyterians, and the Congregationalists.

It has been established that church membership was contingent on the individual's acceptance of church doctrine and his obedience to church discipline. In order for the individual to make a formal acceptance of the requirements of the church, he had to evidence his "elected"
status by a personal testimony to prove his religious experience was genuine. Thus adherence to church doctrine, a personal religious experience, and a worthy life were the requirements for church membership. By inference the individual who was not a church member was a "sinner" and if God had not foreordained his "election," he was due to suffer the eternal punishment of the wicked. Moreover, the experience of salvation could not be achieved without the initiative of the Holy Spirit.

B. Lincoln and the Church.

As it has been established, organized Christianity formed the religious environment of Lincoln. He grew up under the influence of the church. In addition, he was familiar not only with the teachings of the church, he lived in the midst of the frontier evangelistic program of the church. The frontier evangelism that took the form of revivalism was a definite part of his religious environment; yet revivalistic endeavors were not successful in "convicting" him of his "depraved condition."

Lincoln probably attended church services during his early life. It is certain that he and his wife attended the Springfield First Presbyterian Church. He became acquainted with several ministers during his Springfield residence. When he became President he attended the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church with his family. He recognized the value of institutional Christianity and the importance of public worship even though he could not identify himself as a member of the church. His writings indicated his respect for the church and the importance he attached to it during its role in the Civil War.
Lincoln's high regard of the church, however, was not conducive to warrant a willingness to identify himself with organized Christianity. The fact has been established that he did not become a church member; and the crux of the problem was concerned with how to account for the reasons.

After an examination of the evidence, Lincoln did not join the church because he could not honestly accept the form and content of organized Christianity. He did not identify himself with the church for the reason that he did not consider adherence to church doctrine as essential to salvation. Specifically, the criterion of his religious faith was essentially ethical, and due to this reason he rejected the church emphasis on Calvinistic theology as unnecessary to salvation. Church membership to him was not important as a requisite to the Christian life. Reliable sources indicated that he would have gladly joined the church providing that the primary consideration of the Two Great Commandments of Jesus would have been the sole qualifications for church membership. Lincoln found that organized Christianity had refused to put new wine into new wineskins; the church denominations that represented Jesus Christ were attempting to perform the impossible—putting new wine into old wineskins. Lincoln learned through experience that the living spirit of Jesus could not be contained in the rigid forms of church doctrine. He was aware that the way of Jesus as represented by his life and teachings was infinitely larger and more meaning-ful than the example exhibited by the church.
Lincoln also rebelled against the exclusiveness of the denominations. He did not condone the divisive quarrels of the churches. To him the brotherhood of mankind was the fundamental goal of human life. The denominations, according to his opinion, were not conducive to fostering a spirit of brotherhood. He could not justify the exclusive claims of "revealed religion" if the claims sowed the spirit of divisiveness among people. He recognized the divisive spirit of the churches and he refused to identify himself with it.

C. Religious Faith of Lincoln.

Lincoln believed in God. He was essentially religious and his life was motivated chiefly by the ethical example of Jesus. He read the Bible and considered that it contained a record of the religious experiences of mankind, and that the great principles manifested in it were divinely inspired. He attempted to adhere to the ethics of the Bible; however, as with Martin Luther and others his own individual conscience was the rule of his faith.

Due to his Calvinistic background, Lincoln retained to a certain extent the philosophical forms of Calvinism. He believed in the overruling providence of God in human affairs, but not in the sense that man was a slave to God. Lincoln allowed in his mind room for human freedom and it was evident that he believed that man could and should cooperate with the will of God. He apparently used to an extent also the terminology of Calvinism, but he gave a new ethical meaning to it.

He believed in mankind and the example of his life proved it. The concern for the Negro as a human being endowed with God-given
rights was evidenced in Lincoln's concept of human nature. The idea of total depravity in the Calvinistic sense was alien to him. He believed that man could rise above his circumstances, rise above his finite imperfections, and under the quiet influence of God, become the kind of man he ought to be. Lincoln recognized the existence of sin in mankind, but he rejected the orthodox idea that man in his "sinful state" could not do the things pleasing in the sight of God. His concept of sin and salvation was based on Christian ethics--"Christian" ethics in the sense that as Jesus taught man to love God and his fellowman, thereby, sin was dispelled according to the degree that man practiced love toward others.

Lincoln's belief in a personal God was attended by a belief in the personal immortality of the soul. Moreover, he believed that mankind would eventually be saved--universal immortality. Although his views are not explicit, it is apparent that he was repelled by the orthodox idea that "sinners" would receive everlasting punishment. His reverence for life and his sense of justice caused him to reject the idea that the sins of a short earthly life would warrant an eternal hell.

Lincoln was a Christian, but not in the orthodox sense of the term. He was a follower of Jesus, but he was not a church member. He burst the narrow confines of institutional Christianity because he could not conform to the orthodox theology and organization of the church. His religious faith was a personal matter between himself and God--an experience achieved through life itself. The relationship of his life with other persons was motivated by ethical considerations. His belief in God was attended by his belief in man; thus his view was to affirm life, not to deny it. As a follower of Jesus he loved God and his fellowmen.
D. Significance of Lincoln to Church History.

The life of Abraham Lincoln was a living challenge to organized Christianity during his time. The example of his life revealed that an individual is more important than organizations. The church of his time could not claim him because his spirit was too great to be confined within the doctrinal and institutional forms of Christianity.

This fact alone should be a challenge to the church of today and to the church of future generations.

The infinite spirit of Jesus the Christ can never become confined to the exclusive form and content of any given denomination within the Christian church.

Church historians may well consider that Christianity—the way of Jesus the Christ—was exemplified in an unique way by the life of Abraham Lincoln.
APPENDIX A

An analysis of the following Lincoln addresses:

The First Inaugural Address
The Emancipation Proclamation
The Gettysburg Address
The Second Inaugural Address
Fellow citizens of the United States:

In compliance with a custom as old as the government itself, I appear before you to address you briefly, and to take, in your presence, the oath prescribed by the Constitution of the United States, to be taken by the President "before he enters on the execution of his office."

I do not consider it necessary, at present, for me to discuss those matters of administration about which there is no special anxiety, or excitement.

Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern States, that by the accession of a Republican Administration, their property, and their peace, and personal security, are to be endangered. There has never been any reasonable cause for such apprehension. Indeed, the most ample evidence to the contrary has all the while existed, and been open to their inspection. It is found in nearly all the published speeches of him who now addresses you. I do but quote from one of those speeches when I declare that "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so." Those who nominated and elected me did so with full knowledge that I had made this, and many similar declarations, and had never recanted them. And more than this, they placed in the platform, for my acceptance, and as a law to themselves, and to me, the clear and emphatic resolution which I now read:

"Resolved, That the maintenance inviolate of the rights of the States, and especially the right of each State to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively, is essential to that balance of power on which the perfection and endurance of our political fabric depend; and we denounce the lawless invasion by armed force of the soil of any State or Territory, no matter under what pretext, as among the gravest of crimes."

I now reiterate these sentiments: and in doing so, I only press upon the public attention the most conclusive evidence of which the case is susceptible, that the property, peace and security of no section are to be in anywise endangered by the now incoming Administration. I add too, that all the protection which, consistently with the Constitution and the laws, can be given, will be cheerfully
given to all the States when lawfully demanded, for whatever cause—as cheerfully to one section, as to another.

There is much controversy about the delivering up of fugitives from service or labor. The clause I now read is as plainly written in the Constitution as any other of its provisions:

"No person held to service or labor in one State, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due."

It is scarcely questioned that this provision was intended by those who made it, for the reclaiming of what we call fugitive slaves; and the intention of the law-giver is the law. All members of Congress swear their support to the whole Constitution—to this provision as much as to any other. To the proposition, then, that slaves whose cases come within the terms of this clause, "shall be delivered up," their oaths are unanimous. Now, if they would make the effort in good temper, could they not, with nearly equal unanimity, frame and pass a law, by means of which to keep good that unanimous oath?

There is some difference of opinion whether this clause should be enforced by national or by state authority; but surely that difference is not a very material one. If the slave is to be surrendered, it can be of but little consequence to him, or to others, by which authority it is done. And should any one, in any case, be content that his oath shall go unkept, on a merely unsubstantial controversy as to how it shall be kept?

Again, in any law upon this subject, ought not all the safeguards of liberty known in civilized and humane jurisprudence to be introduced, so that a free man be not, in any case, surrendered as a slave? And might it not be well, at the same time, to provide by law for the enforcement of that clause in the Constitution which guarantees that "The citizens of each State shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States?"

I take the official oath to-day, with no mental reservations, and with no purpose to construe the Constitution or laws, by any hypercritical rules. And while I do not choose now to specify particular acts of Congress as proper to be enforced, I do suggest, that it will be much safer for all, both in official and private stations, to conform to, and abide by, all those acts which stand unrepealed, than to violate any of them, trusting to find impunity in having them held to be unconstitutional.

It is seventy-two years since the first inauguration of a President under our national Constitution. During that period fifteen different
and greatly distinguished citizens, have, in succession, administered
the executive branch of the government. They have conducted it
through many perils; and, generally, with great success. Yet, with
all this scope for precedent, I now enter upon the same task for the
brief constitutional term of four years, under great and peculiar
difficulty. A disruption of the Federal Union heretofore only men-
aced, is now formidable attempted.

I hold, that in contemplation of universal law, and of the Con-
stitution, the Union of these States is perpetual. Perpetuity is
implied, if not expressed, in the fundamental law of all national
governments. It is safe to assert that no government proper, ever
had a provision in its organic law for its own termination. Continue
to execute all the express provisions of our national Constitution,
and the Union will endure forever—it being impossible to destroy it,
except by some action not provided for in the instrument itself.

Again, if the United States be not a government proper, but an
association of States in the nature of contract merely, can it, as a
contract, be peaceably unmade, by less than all the parties who made
it? One party to a contract may violate it—break it, so to speak;
but does it not require all to lawfully rescind it?

Descending from these general principles, we find the proposi-
tion that, in legal contemplation, the Union is perpetual, confirmed
by the history of the Union itself. The Union is much older than the
Constitution. It was formed in fact, by the Articles of Association
in 1774. It was matured and continued by the Declaration of Inde-
pendence in 1776. It was further matured and the faith of all the
then thirteen States expressly plighted and engaged that it should
be perpetual, by the Articles of Confederation in 1778. And finally,
in 1787, one of the declared objects for ordaining and establishing
the Constitution, was "to form a more perfect union."

But if destruction of the Union, by one, or by a part only, of
the States, be lawfully possible, the Union is less perfect than be-
fore the Constitution, having lost the vital element of perpetuity.

It follows from these views that no State, upon its own mere
motion, can lawfully get out of the Union,—that resolves and ordi-
nances to that effect are legally void; and that acts of violence,
within any State or States, against the authority of the United
States, are insurrectionary or revolutionary, according to circum-
stances.

I therefore consider that, in view of the Constitution and the
laws, the Union is unbroken; and, to the extent of my ability, I
shall take care, as the Constitution itself expressly enjoins upon
me, that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the
States. Doing this I deem to be only a simple duty on my part; and
I shall perform it, so far as practicable, unless my rightful
masters, the American people, shall withhold the requisite means, or, in some authoritative manner, direct the contrary. I trust this will not be regarded as a menace, but only as the declared purpose of the Union that it will constitutionally defend, and maintain itself.

In doing this there needs to be no bloodshed or violence; and there shall be none, unless it be forced upon the national authority. The power confided to me, will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property, and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imposts; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion—no using of force against, or among the people anywhere. Where hostility to the United States, in any interior locality, shall be so great and so universal, as to prevent competent resident citizens from holding the Federal offices, there will be no attempt to force obnoxious strangers among the people for that object. While the strict legal right may exist in the government to enforce the exercise of these offices, the attempt to do so would be so irritating, and so nearly impracticable with all, that I deem it better to forego, for the time, the uses of such offices.

The mails, unless repelled, will continue to be furnished in all parts of the Union. So far as possible, the people everywhere shall have that sense of perfect security which is most favorable to calm thought and reflection. The course here indicated will be followed, unless current events, and experience, shall show a modification, or change, to be proper; and in every case and exigency, my best discretion will be exercised, according to circumstances actually existing, and with a view and a hope of a peaceful solution of the national troubles, and the restoration of fraternal sympathies and affections.

That there are persons in one section, or another who seek to destroy the Union at all events, and are glad of any pretext to do it, I will neither affirm or deny; but if there be such, I need address no word to them. To those, however, who really love the Union, may I not speak?

Before entering upon so grave a matter as the destruction of our national fabric, with all its benefits, its memories, and its hopes, would it not be wise to ascertain precisely why we do it? Will you hazardous so desperate a step, while there is any possibility that any portion of the ills you fly from, have no real existence? Will you, while the certain ills you fly to, are greater than all the real ones you fly from? Will you risk the commission of so fearful a mistake?

All profess to be content in the Union, if all constitutional rights can be maintained. Is it true, then, that any right, plainly written in the Constitution, has been denied? I think not. Happily the human mind is so constituted, that no party can reach to the audacity of doing this. Think, if you can, of a single instance in
which a plainly written provision of the Constitution has ever been
denied. If, by the mere force of numbers, a majority should deprive
a minority of any clearly written constitutional right, it might, in
a moral point of view, justify revolution--certainly would, if such
right were a vital one. But such is not our case. All the vital
rights of minorities, and of individuals, are so plainly assured to
them, by affirmations and negations, guaranties and prohibitions,
in the Constitution, that controversies never arise concerning them.
But no organic law can ever be framed with a provision specifically
applicable to every question which may occur in practical adminis-
tration. No foresight can anticipate, nor any document of reasonable
length contain express provisions for all possible questions. Shall
fugitives from labor be surrendered by national of by State authority?
The Constitution does not expressly say. May Congress prohibit sla-
very in the territories? The Constitution does not expressly say.
Must Congress protect slavery in the territories? The Constitution
does not expressly say.

From questions of this class spring all our constitutional contro-
versies, and we divide upon them into majorities and minorities. If
the minority will not acquiesce, the majority must, or the govern-
ment must cease. There is no other alternative; for continuing the
government, is acquiescence on one side or the other. If a minority,
in such case, will secede rather than acquiesce, they make a pre-
cedent which, in turn, will divide and ruin them; for a minority of
their own will secede from them, whenever a majority refuses to be
controlled by such minority. For instance, why may not any portion
of a new confederacy, a year or two hence, arbitrarily secede again,
precisely as portions of the present Union now claim to secede from
it. All who cherish disunion sentiments, are now being educated to
the exact temper of doing this. Is there such perfect identity of
interests among the States to compose a new Union, as to produce
harmony only, and prevent renewed secession?

Plainly, the central idea of secession, is the essence of anarchy.
A majority, held in restraint by constitutional checks, and limi-
tations, and always changing easily, with deliberate changes of pop-
ular opinions and sentiments, is the only true sovereign of a free
people. Whoever rejects it, does, of necessity, fly to anarchy or
to despotism. Unanimity is impossible; the rule of a minority, as a
permanent arrangement, is wholly inadmissible; so that, rejecting
the majority principle, anarchy, or despotism in some form, is all
that is left.

I do not forget the position assumed by some, that constitutional
questions are to be decided by the Supreme Court; nor do I deny that
such decisions must be binding in any case, upon the parties to a
suit, as to the object of that suit, while they are also entitled to
very high respect and consideration, in all parallel cases, by all
other departments of the government. And while it is obviously
possible that such decision may be erroneous in any given case, still
the evil effect following it, being limited to that particular case,
with the chance that it may be over-ruled, and never become a pre­
cedent for other cases, can better be borne than could the evils of
a different practice. At the same time the candid citizen must con­
fess that if the policy of the government, upon vital questions,
affecting the whole people, is to be irrevocably fixed by decisions
of the Supreme Court, the instant they are made, in ordinary liti­
gation between parties, in personal actions, the people will have
ceased, to be their own rulers, having, to that extent, practically
resigned their government, into the hands of that eminent tribunal.
Nor is there, in this view, any assault upon the court, or the
judges. It is a duty, from which they may not shrink, to decide
cases properly brought before them; and it is no fault of theirs, if
others seek to turn their decisions to political purposes.

One section of our country believes slavery is right, and ought
to be extended, while the other believes it is wrong, and ought not
to be extended. This is the only substantial dispute. The fugitive
slave clause of the Constitution, and the law for the suppression of
the foreign slave trade, are each as well enforced, perhaps, as any
law can ever be in a community where the moral sense of the people
imperfectly supports the law itself. The great body of the people
abide by the dry legal obligation in both cases, and a few break
over in each. This, I think, cannot be perfectly cured; and it
would be worse in both cases after the separation of the sections,
than before. The foreign slave trade, now imperfectly suppressed,
would be ultimately revived without restriction, in one section;
while fugitive slaves, now only partially surrendered, would not be
surrendered at all, by the other.

Physically speaking, we cannot separate. We cannot remove our
respective sections from each other, nor build an impassable wall
between them. A husband and wife may be divorced, and go out of
the presence, and beyond the reach of each other; but the different parts
of our country cannot do this. They cannot but remain face to face;
and intercourse, either amicable or hostile, must continue between
them. Is it possible then to make that intercourse more advan­
tageous, or more satisfactory, after separation than before? Can
aliens make treaties easier than friends can make laws? Can treaties
be more faithfully enforced between aliens, than laws can among
friends? Suppose you go to war, you cannot fight always; and when,
after much loss on both sides, and no gain on either, you cease
fighting, the identical old questions, as to terms of intercourse,
are again upon you.

This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who
inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing govern­
ment, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it,
or their revolutionary right to dismember, or overthrow it. I can
not be ignorant of the fact that many worthy, and patriotic citizens
are desirous of having the national constitution amended. While I
make no recommendation of amendments, I fully recognize the rightful
authority of the people over the whole subject, to be exercised in either of the modes prescribed in the instrument itself; and I should, under existing circumstances, favor, rather than oppose, a fair opportunity being afforded the people to act upon it.

I will venture to add that, to me, the convention mode seems preferable, in that it allows amendments to originate with the people themselves, instead of only permitting them to take, or reject, propositions, originated by others, not especially chosen for the purpose, and which might not be precisely such, as they would wish to either accept or refuse. I understand a proposed amendment to the Constitution—which amendment, however, I have not seen, has passed Congress, to the effect that the federal government, shall never interfere with the domestic institutions of the States, including that of persons held to service. To avoid misconstruction of what I have said, I depart from my purpose not to speak of particular amendments, so far as to say that, holding such a provision to now be implied constitutional law, I have no objection to its being made express, and irrevocable.

The Chief Magistrate derives all his authority from the people, and they have conferred none upon him to fix terms for the separation of the States. The people themselves can do this also if they choose; but the executive, as such, has nothing to do with it. His duty is to administer the present government, as it came to his hands, and to transmit it, unimpaired by him, to his successor.

Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better, or equal hope, in the world? In our present differences, is either party without faith of being in the right? If the Almighty Ruler of nations, with his eternal truth and justice, be on your side of the North, or on yours of the South, that truth, and that justice, will surely prevail, by the judgment of this great tribunal, the American people.

By the frame of the government under which we live, this same people have wisely given their public servants but little power for mischief; and have, with equal wisdom, provided for the return of that little to their own hands at very short intervals.

While the people retain their virtue, and vigilance, no administration, by any extreme of wickedness or folly, can very seriously injure the government, in the short space of four years.

My countrymen, one and all, think calmly and well, upon this whole subject. Nothing valuable can be lost by taking time. If there be an object to hurry any of you, in hot haste, to a step which you would never take deliberately, that object will be frustrated by taking time; but no good object can be frustrated by it. Such of you as are now dissatisfied, still have the old Constitution unimpaired, and, on the sensitive point, the laws of your own framing
under it; while the new administration will have no immediate power, if it would, to change either. If it were admitted that you who are dissatisfied, hold the right side in the dispute, there still is no single good reason for precipitate action. Intelligence, patriotism, Christianity, and a firm reliance on Him, who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust, in the best way, all our present difficulty.

In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you. You can have no conflict, without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to "preserve, protect and defend" it.

I am loth to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

When Lincoln stood before the people on March 4, 1861, the task that he had anticipated in his farewell remarks at Springfield was now his as he presented the inaugural address. He had indicated his reliance upon God and had asked the people to pray for the success of his administration. It was evident that he sought divine guidance as he approached the heavy responsibilities of the presidential office.

There are definite Christian implications in his first inaugural address. At the outset of his speech Lincoln referred to the subsequent oath which was incumbent upon him, and the sincerity of his purpose to fulfil the obligations of the oath was apparent. Moreover, he immediately focused attention to the problem of national disunity and sought to allay the apprehension of the Southern States concerning the new Republican administration. He assured the people "that the property, peace and security of no section are to be in anywise endangered by the now incoming Administration."
He also affirmed that he assumed the presidential duties "with no mental reservations, and with no purpose to construe the Constitution or laws, by any hypercritical rules." The hypocrisy that Jesus repudiated among the "scribes and Pharisees" was equally repugnant to Lincoln as he considered his own relationship with the people. Lincoln understood the principle of honesty and he made it clear that he was to remain free from deceit in the administration of his office.

In his consideration of "universal law" and the Constitution, Lincoln believed that the United States was perpetual—"the Union is perpetual, confirmed by the history of the Union itself." His concept of "universal law" was that all national governments were instituted on the basis of the underlying principle of perpetuity. He stated that "no State, upon its own mere motion, can lawfully get out of the Union." Moreover, any "acts of violence" against the United States were "insurrectionary or revolutionary." The moral relationship of the states to the national government was expressly implied at this point. Lincoln believed that no state had a moral right to secede from the Union. He admitted that if "a majority should deprive a minority of any clearly written constitutional right, it might, in a moral point of view, justify revolution—certainly would, if such rights were a vital one." But Lincoln emphasized that the "vital rights of minorities" were not endangered by the government.

The main argument of Lincoln at this juncture was to reason with the people against the overt danger of anarchy. From the viewpoint of Christian ethics the theory of anarchy cannot be substantiated. Lincoln knew that the dignity of man, the rights and responsibilities of
individuals, and the harmony of mankind would be broken if anarchy resulted. He plainly asserted that "the central idea of secession" was "the essence of anarchy." In addition he pointed out that secession was not the answer because secession would lead to secession ad infinitum.

In reference to the Constitution Lincoln said "no organic law can ever be framed with a provision specifically applicable to every question which may occur in practical administration." The same principle relative to the Constitution is applicable to Lincoln's attitude toward the doctrines of institutional Christianity. He refused to accept the concept that Christian doctrine as contained in the various confessions of faith was absolutely obligatory in matters of religious faith. In further reference to the Constitution he said: "No foresight can anticipate, nor any document of reasonable length contain express provisions for all possible questions." The evidence of this dissertation is that in matters pertaining to civil government as well as to religion, Lincoln recognized the fundamental principle that absolute truth could not be expressed absolutely in written documents. In this connection he also referred to the Bible as not presenting specific answers to the issue of slavery.¹

Lincoln pointed out that "the only substantial dispute" in the nation was over the problem of slavery. He did not elaborate upon the right or wrong of the issue because his belief in the latter position was well known; but he did call upon the people not to separate themselves concerning the issue.

During the closing paragraphs of the address Lincoln mentioned

¹ See appendix, page 153.
specifically his belief that God was actively interested in the affairs of the nation:

If the Almighty Ruler of nations, with his eternal truth and justice, be on your side of the North, or on yours of the South, that truth, and that justice, will surely prevail, by the judgment of this great tribunal, the American people.

He emphasized the right of the people to government—a government based on the principle of democracy. He showed his confidence in the "great tribunal, the American people." However, he expressly conjoined the idea of self-government with the rule of God over all nations; thus specifying his faith that the "eternal truth and justice" of God would prevail. By this he meant that the will of God would be learned by the people, and executed by the people; not through the arbitrary will of God being forced on the people, but through the people's understanding of God.

In an effort to avoid violence Lincoln urged the people to "think calmly and well, upon this whole subject." He abhorred the tendency of radicals on both sides of the slavery issue to act in "hot haste." According to Lincoln there was no reason to justify precipitous action that might lead to civil war. He said:

Intelligence, patriotism, Christianity, and a firm reliance on Him, who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust, in the best way, all our present difficulty.

It is significant that Lincoln placed the word "intelligence" first in the above quotation. His approach to all problems was rational. Reason and faith were conjoined in the religious philosophy of Lincoln. The chief emphasis of this sentence was his firm reliance on God to help the nation to resolve its difficulty. He believed that God would not forsake the nation if the people continued to rely upon divine guidance.
Lincoln did not believe in the theory of the divine right of kings; however, there is evidence that he believed that he had an "oath registered in Heaven" to uphold the government. As the duly elected president of the United States he believed that his oath was under the divine judgment of God. He believed that under God he should discharge the duties of his office to the best of his abilities, and he made it clear that no countryman had an oath "registered in Heaven" to destroy the national government. A strong sense of mission was evidenced by Lincoln's solemn acceptance of the presidential office.

The last paragraph of the address is particularly significant because it contains the underlying ethical principle of the entire speech. The paramount aim of the address was to restore the fraternal bonds of trust and good will among the people. It should be noted that Seward's suggestion to Lincoln for a closing paragraph formed the basis for Lincoln's closing words; however, Lincoln changed the words and made the suggestion distinctively his own:

I am loth to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

There is a resemblance between Lincoln's attitude toward the South and Jesus' attitude toward Jerusalem. As Jesus longed for Jerusalem to accept the kingdom of God, Lincoln desired that the South would remain in the Union. There was no animosity in the heart of Jesus as he meditated over the city that stoned the prophets; and Lincoln felt no malice toward the South. He was reluctant to close--"We are not enemies, but friends."
Lincoln was aware of the potential menace of civil war, yet he urged that the "bonds of affection" must not be broken. He called to remembrance the "battle-field, and patriot grave" of America's history, and appealed to everyone to rally behind the government in order that a better Union might be perpetuated. He hoped that the "better angels" of human nature would conquer the evil manifested in the hearts of those who seemed inclined to destroy the Union. The phrase "better angels of our nature" implies Lincoln's belief in the inherent goodness of human nature. It suggests also that he believed man was created in the image of God. There is no implication that he advocated a belief in angelology. Seward had suggested the phrase "guardian angel of the nation"; Lincoln changed the idea of an angel guarding the nation to a simple symbolic expression of the term "angels" to represent man's essential goodness.1

The address evidenced Lincoln's belief in God and in man. He held that God was active in human history and that ultimately mankind would vindicate through human experience the will of God. Democracy was to Lincoln the essence of good government because he believed in the rights and responsibilities of the individual. He believed that people were capable of governing themselves. He advocated the settlement of disputes on the basis of rational deliberation. He sought to avoid war, but was ready to defend the government if it were attacked. In seeking to unite the Northern and Southern factions, he carried the issue into ethical considerations; thus attempting to foster the spirit of good will. The general tone of his speech was, in terms of ethics, essentially Christian.

1 Basler, op. cit., IV, p. 262.
EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

January 1, 1863

By the President of the United States of America:

A Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

"That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people thereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

"That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be, in good faith, represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States."

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. Johns, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and

1 Basler, op. cit., VI, pp. 28-30.
Orleans, including the City of New-Orleans) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South-Carolina, North-Carolina, and Virginia, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkeley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth-City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk & Portsmouth); and which excepted parts are, for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Seven months after the death of his son, Willie, in February, 1862, Lincoln issued his first proclamation for the freeing of the slaves. The loss of two sons, the grief and nervous condition of his wife, and the heavy pressures of war weighed as an increasing burden on Lincoln. Yet he did not lose sight of the principles for which he was fighting to secure for the nation. The first emancipation proclamation of September 22, 1862, had stipulated that all slaves would be declared "forever free" on January 1, 1863.

It should be noted that the final proclamation was expressly
designated as a "fit and necessary war measure for suppressing" the rebellion.

Secretary Chase records that after the battle of Antietam, Lincoln held a cabinet meeting September 22, 1862, and that he stated:

When the rebel army was at Frederick, I determined, as soon as it should be driven out of Maryland, to issue a Proclamation of Emancipation such as I thought most likely to be useful. I said nothing to any one; but I made the promise to myself, and (hesitating a little)--to my Maker. The rebel army is now driven out, and I am going to fulfill that promise.

It is apparent that Lincoln did consider the proclamation as an expedient war measure, and although the battle of Antietam was perhaps not the clear-cut victory he had been anticipating, yet he felt it was sufficient cause to justify the "promise" he had made to his "Maker."

The emancipation of the slaves had been a matter of considerable controversy between the more radical abolitionists and the conservative wing of the Republican party. The radicals wanted complete emancipation while the conservatives thought of compensated measures and a form of colonization. Lincoln had hoped for a gradual emancipation of the slaves in the border states; he had also proposed freedom to slaves liberated by the war, and he had thought of a colonization plan. However, he finally made a decisive act to free the slaves in the major rebellious areas.

By this emancipation proclamation Lincoln became the first recognized head of a nation to grant freedom to a race of people. Regardless of the psychological stimulus given to the war effort by the expedient "war measure" the proclamation was motivated by basic ethical considerations. Lincoln believed that the Negroes were human beings, and as such, they were to be granted the same freedom guaranteed by the Constitution to the white citizens of the nation.
The following quotation expressed the fundamental attitude of Lincoln toward the institution of slavery:

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

With the exception of the final sentence, Lincoln made no specific effort to defend the proclamation at the time of its enactment on religious or moral grounds. The people of the nation knew that he was against slavery before the war began. They were not sure of how he would manage the problem; however, with the act of proclamation the intention of Lincoln was clearly realized—the complete emancipation of the slaves.

Lincoln's sense of justice was based on his concept of man. He held that Negroes were human beings and not mere brutes. It was inconceivable to him that the white race could justify its livelihood on the sweat of slave labor. The institution of slavery was to Lincoln an injustice to mankind.

Throughout his debates with Douglas, Lincoln had insisted that the Constitution was applicable to the Negroes in terms of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." He maintained that the inalienable rights guaranteed by the Constitution were not intended as the exclusive rights of the white citizens.

In his appeal to the "considerate judgment of mankind" Lincoln brought the issue before the universal court of humanity. He believed that his emancipation proclamation would receive favor in the judgment of mankind.

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1 Basler, op. cit., IV, p. 20. (Speech at New Haven, Connecticut, March 6, 1860).
2 See appendix, page 153.
mankind.

An example of the workingmen of Manchester, England, in a letter from Mayor Abel Haywood, January 1, 1863, revealed the response of the labor classes:

We joyfully honor you, as the President, and the Congress with you, for the many decisive steps towards practically exemplifying your belief in the words of your great founders, "All men are created free and equal." ... Accept our high admiration of your firmness in upholding the proclamation of freedom.1

Lincoln answered the workingmen of Manchester, January 19, 1863, stating in part:

I know and deeply deplore the sufferings which the workingmen at Manchester and in all Europe are called to endure in this crisis. It has been often and studiously represented that the attempt to overthrow this government, which was built upon the foundation of human rights, and to substitute for it one which should rest exclusively on the basis of human slavery, was likely to obtain favor of Europe. ... I cannot but regard your decisive utterance upon the question as an instance of sublime Christian heroism which has not been surpassed in any age or in any country. It is, indeed, an energetic and reinspiring assurance of the inherent power of truth and of the ultimate and universal triumph of justice, humanity, and freedom.2

In his own conscience Lincoln believed that he had acted in accordance with the "gracious favor of Almighty God." There is a close similarity between the last sentence of the above quotation of Lincoln's letter to the people of Manchester and the words of Jesus: "... and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (John 8:32). The essence of Lincoln's belief in the "inherent power of truth" is the same as that of Jesus.

The emancipation proclamation was, from the standpoint of Christian ethics, a document of mankind's universal freedom from slavery.

1 Basler, op. cit., VI, p. 55.
2 Ibid., p. 54.
GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

November 19, 1863

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

The battlefield of Gettysburg was a fitting place for the great ideas expressed by Lincoln in his world-renowned address delivered from Cemetery Hill. Almost five months had passed since General George E. Pickett had spear-headed the charge of 15,000 Confederate soldiers across the field toward the Union lines on Cemetery Ridge. When the noise of battle had ceased on this summer day of July 3, 1863, the Union Army had lost 23,000 killed, wounded and missing, and the Confederate Army 28,000.2

The scars of a battlefield are always mute and grim reminders of

1 Basler, op. cit., VII, p. 23. Final text.
2 Sandburg, ALMY, II, p. 342.
the terrible conflict of men at war. When Lincoln stood and looked across the battlefield he was fully aware of the bitter cost of war; yet, though the price of sacrifice was high, he knew that the goal was worth fighting for. His words addressed to the people who had come to dedicate a part of the battleground as a national cemetery, were to become famous for all time to come.

The opening lines of his speech joined the present with the past. He caused the people to remember that the founding fathers had created a new nation on earth. The nation was born in the search for liberty, and it was based on the principle of human equality. The essence of the term "liberty" and the phrase "that all men are created equal" was Christian; Christian according to the spirit of Jesus. Although Calvinists fought for the independence of America, it cannot be said that strict Calvinism was in harmony with the principle "that all men are created equal." The doctrine of unconditional election precludes the principle of human equality. Moreover, concerning human nature, Lincoln expressly implied that he counted the Negro slave as a man within the category of "all men."

In the second paragraph of the speech Lincoln focused attention to the main issue of the war. According to his view the war was a test to determine whether or not all men, including the Negro, were to have the right of human equality. It was also a test of democracy in the sense that though the nation was "conceived in liberty", the wrong outcome of the war might result in the cessation of liberty. In fact, Lincoln believed that the nation could not live unless the victory was for the North. It should be noted in this connection that Lincoln did not believe that "might makes right." In his Cooper Institute address of
February 27, 1860, Lincoln said:

Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it.\(^1\)

He believed that the men who "gave their lives that the nation might live" were fighting for the "right" and in their "might" he hoped for the victory.

Lincoln had come to dedicate a part of the battlefield "as a final resting-place" for the soldiers who had given their lives for the cause of the Union. The figure of speech is important from the standpoint of one of the orthodox views of the resurrection of the body at "Judgment Day." Lincoln believed in the immortality of the soul, but he rejected the concept of the resurrection of the body. In a letter to his stepbrother, John D. Johnson, January 12, 1851, he stated concerning the illness of his father:

I sincerely hope father may recover his health, but, tell him to remember to call upon and confide in our great and good and merciful Maker, who will not turn away from him in any extremity. He notes the fall of a sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our head, and He will not forget the dying man who puts his trust in Him. . . . if it be his lot to go now, he will soon have a joyous meeting with many loved ones gone before, and where the rest of us, through the help of God, hope are long to join them.\(^2\)

In paying tribute to the "brave men" who had fought the battle—the "living and dead"—Lincoln understood the principle of sacrifice; that every advance of humanity meant the sacrifice of human life. He viewed the struggle of the war as man's attempt to achieve a greater humanity, and he was fully aware of the necessity of sacrifice. The soldier-dead had hallowed the ground in a far greater way than the living could hope to consecrate it.

1 Basler, op. cit., III, p. 550.
2 Barton, op. cit., p. 77.
Having paid his tribute to the dead, Lincoln turned his attention to the "living" and enjoined them to take up the "unfinished work" with a renewed purpose. The continued remembrance of the sacrifice and heroism of the "honored dead" should stimulate and challenge the people to achieve the goals of the Union. Lincoln recognized the basic principle that the living were morally obligated to the dead to continue the fight for liberty and human equality. There was no spirit of revenge in the attitude of Lincoln; he simply affirmed that the sacrifice of the warrior dead would not be in vain if the people remained true to their moral responsibilities.

What did Lincoln mean by the phrase, "this nation, under God"? It is not necessary to magnify the importance of whether or not he intended to insert the two words "under God" in the manuscript from which he read the speech. The first and second draft omit the reference; the final text includes it. The newspaper versions that appeared in the New York Tribune, Times, and Herald, November 20, 1863, printed the reference.¹ The Edward Everett copy of the speech retained the reference—apparently incorporated from the newspaper versions.² The conclusion of this research is that, with or without, the reference is not necessary to substantiate the claim that Lincoln believed that the nation was under God. Throughout his other writings, Lincoln often referred specifically to the nation as being under the providence of God.

It is important to note that Lincoln did not believe in theocracy; he believed in democracy. The last clause of the speech is conclusive

² Ibid., p. 21.
evidence of this fact. He was opposed to the concept of rule by a priestly class in the same sense that he opposed rule by a dictator. He believed that the people were capable of governing themselves by the power of their inherent rational judgment. Liberty was the keynote with which he began his speech and he concluded it with the same emphasis. The religious implications of his concept of democracy clearly substantiate his belief in religious freedom. His view of God's providence is expressly implied in his democratic theory of government; namely, that if the people were free to govern themselves, they were also free to accept or reject the guidance of God.

Lincoln was optimistic in his hope for "a new birth of freedom." He realized that the true meaning of democracy was a goal toward which humanity was struggling to achieve, and he believed that the experience of a greater freedom could be achieved. Thus the dignity and worth of the individual, as taught by Jesus, was upheld by Lincoln in his high resolve "that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."
SECOND INAUGURAL ADDRESS

March 4, 1865

Fellow Countrymen:

At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued, seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention, and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it—all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

One eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration, which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"

1 Basler, op. cit., VIII, pp. 332-33.
If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences 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 offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope--fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether."

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.

Thurlow Weed wrote to Lincoln on March 4, 1865, complimenting the President on his speech. Although, as Basler points out, "no letter of Weed mentioning the Second Inaugural Address has been found," the reply of Lincoln is extant:

"Every one likes a compliment. Thank you for yours on my little notification speech, and on the recent Inaugural Address. I expect the latter to wear as well as—perhaps better than—any thing I have yet produced; but I believe it is not immediately popular. Men are not flattered by being shown that there has been a difference of purpose between the Almighty and them. To deny it, however, in this case, is to deny that there is a God governing the world. It is a truth which I thought needed to be told; and as whatever of humiliation there is in it, falls most directly on myself, I thought others might afford for me to tell it."

Thus Lincoln appraised one aspect of his address and it is significant to note the importance he attached to the will of God concerning the affairs of mankind. He recognized that the way of man was not

1 Basler, op. cit., VIII, p. 356.
always the way of God.

The first half of the address was devoted to a brief resume of the preceding four years of his administration. Lincoln reiterated the aim of his first inaugural address by stating that it had been "devoted altogether to saving the Union without war." He said the war resulted because there were those who "would make war rather than let the nation survive"—others "would accept war rather than let it perish." There was no doubt in the mind of Lincoln that the cause of the Union was worth fighting for. The South wanted to extend slavery; the government, according to Lincoln, sought to restrict it. But Lincoln felt that neither side had anticipated the resultant conflict; especially, the long duration of the war.

He pointed out that the "same Bible" and the "same God" were believed in by both North and South, and "each invokes His aid against the other." Lincoln could not justify the attitude of the South in asking "a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces"; however, he claimed no right to judge lest he be judged. From a logical point of view God could not answer the prayers of both sides and remain true to His own purposes. Lincoln did not pretend to know the purpose of God in its fullest sense, yet he was reasonably certain that God was opposed to slavery.

Lincoln then quoted Matthew 18:7: "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" According to Lincoln's conjecture slavery was an "offence"—an evil—which had run its course under the providence of God. The "woe" that had resulted from slavery was the war.
Was Lincoln a Calvinist in his understanding of the "providence of God"? Did he believe that God willed slavery and that it had "continued through His appointed time"? Did he believe that God chose the civil war to "remove" the "offence"? While this research does not deny the influence of Calvinism in Lincoln's life, there is sufficient evidence to substantiate the claim that he was not a Calvinist.¹

Lincoln recognized that the will of God operated within the limitations of human history--limitations imposed not by God, but as the consequence of human sin. He believed that God was above and yet in human history; that God was working with humanity to achieve the final divine goal. There is no evidence that Lincoln believed slavery was the will of God, or that it had continued because God had willed that it should continue "through His appointed time." More credit should be given to Lincoln's understanding of the processes of human history; namely, that humanity's evaluation of good and evil is a slow evolvement of the human conscience. The recognition of Lincoln that God "now wills to remove" slavery does not mean that he believed God was unwilling "to remove" slavery previous to this time. It means that he felt God was working with the enlightened conscience of men at a propitious time to effect His will.

Lincoln abhorred war and the implication that God had willed the civil war, as it appears in his speech, does not mean that he believed God imposed the war arbitrarily. The beginning of the war was not the responsibility of God; it was the responsibility of man--the consequence of man's sin. Lincoln was aware of the fact that all other peaceful means had failed to resolve the slavery issue. The war came--the judgment

¹ See Chapter IV, Section A, of the dissertation.
of God--because the North and South refused to arbitrate the issue. Lincoln's appeal to the nation in his first inaugural address to avoid bloodshed was rejected. Yet he believed that God continued to effect his divine purpose even in the midst of war. The war having come as a last resort, it was the best possible way to resolve the slavery issue under the circumstances. Lincoln unquestionably held the view that God's will was on the side of the North. However, the role of God in the war did not, in Lincoln's view, affect "those divine attributes" which believers ascribed to a "Living God." It is certain also that he counted himself among those who believed in a "Living God."

Regardless of how long the war might continue he had faith that the final outcome would mean the end of slavery. It was his prayer that the war should end; however, he made it clear that the war would continue until a complete victory could be achieved for the emancipation of slavery. In the partial quotation of Psalm 19:9, Lincoln affirmed his faith in the ultimate victory of God's will--"the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether."

It is significant that Lincoln refrained from allowing the usual violent passions of war to become a part of his emotional and mental life. He justified the use of the sword to consummate the war, but there was no hate in his justification of its use. He held no malice toward anyone because his charity was extended to everyone. His ethical love for humanity was evidenced by his concern for the nation--for the people who had suffered in the war. The broad lines of his charitable attitude toward the South were extended across the barriers created by war. Thus the essence of Christian love characterized the human greatness of Lincoln.
APPENDIX B

Important documents quoted in dissertation.
THE BATEMAN INCIDENT

The following account is contained in Holland's *The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (1866), pages 236-39:

Mr. Newton Bateman, Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Illinois, occupied a room adjoining and opening into the Executive Chamber. Frequently this door was open during Mr. Lincoln's receptions; and throughout the seven months or more of his occupation Mr. Bateman saw him nearly every day. Often when Mr. Lincoln was tired he closed his door against all intrusion, and called Mr. Bateman into his room for a quiet talk. On one of these occasions Mr. Lincoln took up a book containing a careful canvass of the city of Springfield in which he lived, showing the candidate for whom each citizen had declared it his intention to vote in the approaching election. Mr. Lincoln's friends had, doubtless at his own request, placed the result of the canvass in his hands. This was toward the close of October and only a few days before the election. Calling Mr. Bateman to a seat at his side, having previously locked all the doors, he said: "Let us look over this book. I wish particularly to see how the ministers of Springfield are going to vote." The leaves were turned, one by one, and as the names were examined Mr. Lincoln frequently asked if this one and that one were ministers, or elders, or the members of such or such a church, and sadly expressed his surprise on receiving an affirmative answer. In that manner they went through the book, and then he closed it and sat silently and for some minutes regarding a memorandum in pencil which lay before him. At length he turned to Mr. Bateman with a face full of sadness, and said: "Here are twenty-three ministers, of different denominations, and all of them are against me but three; and here are a great many prominent members of the churches, a very large majority of whom are against me. Mr. Bateman I am not a Christian—God knows I would be one—but I have carefully read the Bible, and I do not so understand this book;" and he drew from his bosom a pocket New Testament. "These men well know," he continued, "that I am for freedom in the territories, freedom everywhere as far as the Constitution and laws will permit, and that my opponents are for slavery. They know this, and yet, with this book in their hands, in the light of which human bondage cannot live a moment, they are going to vote against me. I do not understand it at all."

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

Much of this was uttered as if he were speaking to himself, and with a sad and earnest solemnity of manner impossible to be described. After a pause, he resumed: "Doesn’t it appear strange that men can ignore the moral aspects of this contest? A revelation could not make it plainer to me that slavery or the government must be destroyed. The future would be something awful, as I look at it, but for this rock on which I stand" (alluding to the Testament which he still held in his hand), "especially with the knowledge of how these ministers are going to vote. It seems as if God had borne with this thing (slavery) until the very teachers of religion have come to defend it from the Bible, and to claim for it a divine character and sanction; and now the cup of iniquity is full, and the vials of wrath will be poured out." . . . In the course of the conversation, he dwelt much upon the necessity of faith in the Christian’s God, as an element of successful statesmanship, especially in times like those which were upon him, and said that it gave that calmness and tranquillity of mind, that assurance of ultimate success which made a man firm and immovable amid the wildest excitements. . . . As the two men were about to separate, Mr. Bateman remarked: "I have not supposed that you were accustomed to think so much upon this class of subjects. Certainly your friends generally are ignorant of the sentiments you have expressed to me." He replied quickly: "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."

FORKS OF ELKHORN BAPTIST CHURCH

The church was organized in 1788. It was one of the best administered churches in Kentucky, and its minutes (1800-1820), illustrate the management of a typical frontier church. The following confession of faith is quoted from Sweet’s Religion on the American Frontier (Vol. I, 1936), page 303:

1st We believe the scriptures of the old and new Testament to be
the Infallible word of God, and the only rule of faith and practice

2ndly We believe in one self Existing God, and that there is three persons in the divine Essence or nature phrased in the Bible, by, God the Father, God the Son, & God the Holy Spirit, and yet these three are but one God, not admitting of a Priority or Seniority, in the Godhead or Essence

3rdly We believe in the doctrine of the fall of man, the depravity of human nature, the Inability of the Creature, to recover it's self to life

4thly We believe in the doctrine of Sovereign Grace, Justification by the righteousness of Christ alone, final preserverance of the Saints, resurrection of the dead and a General Judgment

5thly We believe the Joys of the righteous and punishment of the Wicked will be Eternal

6thly We believe Baptism and the Lords Supper are ordinance of Jesus Christ and that Believers are the Subjects of these Ordinances and the true mode of Baptism is by Immersion.

ELKHORN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

The minutes of this Kentucky association are preserved from 1785 to 1805. The following record of October 14, 1793, is quoted from Sweet, Vol. I, pages 459-60:

... We do agree to receive the regular Baptist Confession of Faith but to prevent its usurping a tiranical power over the Consciences of any, we do not mean that every person is to be bound to the strict observance of everything therein Contained, Yet that it holds forth the essential truths of the Gospel, and that the Doctrins of Salvation by Christ, and free and unmerited grace alone ought to be believed by every Christian, and maintained by every minister of the Gospel and that we do believe in those Doctrins relative to the Trinity the Divinity of Christ, the sacred authority of the Scriptures the universal depravity of human nature; the total inability of men to help themselves without the aid of divine grace; the necessity of repentance towards, God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the justification of our persons entirely by the righteousness of Christ imputed; Believers Baptism by immersion only and self-denial. And that the supreme Judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and, all decrees of Councils opinions of ancient writers doctrines of men and private spirits are to be examined and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other than the Holy Scriptures, delivered by the Spirit, into which scripture so delivered our faith is finially resolved.
PRESBYTERIAN CONFESSION OF FAITH

This account is from the records of the Presbyterian Church of Franklin, Portage County, Ohio, adopted May 1, 1822. The records cover the period from 1819 to 1838. The following quotation is from Sweet's Religion on the American Frontier (Vol. II, 1936), pages 528-30:

Art. 1. You believe there is one God, the Creator, Preserver, & Governor of the Universe; that he is selfexistent, independent, unchangeable, infinite in mercy, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

Art. 2. You believe that the scriptures of the Old & New Testaments, were given by inspiration of God, that they contain a complete and harmonious system of divine truth; and are the only perfect rule of religious faith and practice.

Art. 3. You believe that there are three persons in the God-head, the Father, the Son & the Holy Ghost, that these three are in essence one, & in all divine perfection equal.

Art. 4. You believe that God governs all things according to his eternal and infinitely wise purpose, so as to render them conducive to his own glory, and the greatest good of the universe, and in perfect consistency with his hatred of sin, the liberty of man, and the importance of the use of means.

Art. 5. You believe that God at first created man in his own moral image, consisting in righteousness and true holiness, that he fell from that holy and happy state by sinning against God, and that since the fall of Adam, all mankind came into the world with a disposition entirely sinful.

Art. 6. You believe that in reference to the fall of man, God did from eternity appoint the Lord Jesus Christ, his only and well beloved son, mediator, who assumed our nature and made atonement for sin; that God can now consistently exercise mercy toward sinners, & that he will pardon all those who repent and believe the gospel.

Art. 7. You believe that as all men in their natural state reject Christ, God from eternity choose some of the human race to salvation thro' sanctification of the spirit & belief of the truth, and that all those whom he had thus chosen, he will renew and sanctify in this life, and keep them by his power thro' faith unto salvation; and that all those whom he had not thus elected are left to pursue their own chosen way and suffer the punishment due to their sins.
Art. 8. You believe that Christians are justified freely by grace thro' faith, & that altho' they are thus freely justified, still the law of God as a rule of duty remains in full force, and that all men are under obligation perfectly to obey it.--

Art. 9. You believe that personal holiness is the certain effect of the renewing operation of the Holy Spirit, and affords to believers the only scriptural evidence of their justification, and title to the heavenly inheritance; that you have been thus renewed, and that you exercise faith in Christ.

Art. 10. You believe that men are free and voluntary in all their conduct, that the requirements of God are perfectly reasonable, & that sinners are inexcusable for impenitence and unbelief.--

Art. 11. You believe that the visible church Christ, consists of visible saints, who publicly profess their faith in him, and that baptized children so belong to the church, as to be under its care and instruction.

Art. 12. You believe in the divine appointment of the Christian Sabbath, & of the sacraments of the N. Testament, baptism and the Lords Supper, which all are under obligation in the exercise of faith to observe, & that it is the duty of parents to dedicate their children to God in baptism, and train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Art. 13. You believe that the soul is immortal, & that at the last day Christ will raise the dead, & judge the world in righteousness, that all who die impenitent will go away into endless punishment, and the righteous be received to heaven to enjoy eternal felicity.

CARTWRIGHT'S DESCRIPTION OF FRONTIER METHODISTS

Peter Cartwright described the Methodist preachers in his Autobiography (1856). The following account is taken from Sweet's Religion on the American Frontier (Vol. IV, 1946), pages 74-75:

The Methodists in that early day dressed plain; attended their meetings faithfully, especially preaching, prayer and class meetings; they wore no jewelry, no ruffles; they would frequently walk three or four miles to class meetings, and home again, on Sundays; they would go thirty or forty miles to their quarterly meetings, and think it a glorious privilege to meet their presiding elder, and the rest of the preachers. They could, nearly every soul of them, sing our hymns and spiritual songs. They religiously kept the Sabbath day; many of them abstained from dram-drinking, not because the temperance reformation
was ever heard of in that day, but because it was interdicted in the General Rules of our Discipline. Methodists of that day stood up and faced their preacher when they sung; they kneeled down in the public congregation as well as elsewhere, when the preacher said, "Let us pray." . . . Parents did not allow their children to go to balls or plays; they did not send them to dancing-schools; they generally fasted once a week, and almost universally on the Friday before each quarterly meeting.

JOURNAL OF BENJAMIN LAKIN

Lakin's record of his preaching activities covers the period from 1794 to 1820. Most of his ministry was confined to Kentucky. The current theological controversies of the frontier during Lincoln's time is shown by Lakin's statement concerning the Arminian dissent from Calvinism. The following account was a sermon by Lakin preached in 1819 in which the Calvinistic-Arminian controversy is presented. Quoted from Sweet's Religion on the American Frontier (Vol. IV, 1946), pages 256-58:

As the Armenians had been so severely condemned (and that unheard) and some of the people were enquiring what an Armenian was. I informed the people that I would preach on the subject, and let them know the doctrines held by the Armenians which I endeavored to do on Sunday October 3, 1819. By stating the substance of the doctrines established by the Synod of Dort, as contained in the following Articles--

ART. 1. Of Divine Predestination--That God, by an absolute decree hath elected to salvation a very small number of men, without any regard to their faith or obedience whatsoever, and secluded from saving grace all the rest of mankind, and apointed them by the same decree to eternal damnation without any regard to their infidelity or impenitency

ART. 2. Of the merit and effect of Christ's Death--That Jesus Christ hath not suffered death for any other, but for those elect only, having neither had any intention nor commandment of his Father to make satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

ART. 3. Of man's will in the state of nature--That by Adam's fall his posterity lost their free will, being put to an unavoidable necessity to do or not to do whatsoever they do or do not, whether it be good or evil; being thereunto predestinated by the eternal and effectual secret decree of God.
ART. 4. Of the manner of conversion—That God, to save his elect from the corrupt mass, doth beget faith in them by a power equal to that whereby he created the world, and raised up the dead, insomuch that such unto whom he gives that grace cannot reject it, and the rest being reprobated cannot accept of it.

ART. 5. Of the certainty of Perseverance—That such as have once received that grace by faith, can never fall from it finally or totally notwithstanding the most enormous sins they can commit.

These propositions I stated as the points that the Armenians descent from, without making any comments on them. I then stated the Armenian sentiments as contained in Buck’s Theological Dictionary on those points as follows: The distinguishing tenets of the Armenians may be comprised in the five following articles relative to predestination, universal redemption, the corruption of man, conversion, and perseverance, viz.

I. That God, from all eternity, determined to bestow salvation on those whom he foresaw would persevere unto the end; and to inflict everlasting punishments on those who should continue in their unbelief, and resist his divine succours; so that election was conditional and reprobational in like manner, the result of foreseen infidelity and persevering wickedness.

II. That Jesus Christ, by his sufferings and death, made an atonement for the sins of mankind in general, and of every individual in particular; that, however, none but those who believe in him can be partakers of divine benefits—

III. That the true faith cannot proceed from the exercise of our natural faculties and powers, nor from the force and operation of free will; since man in consequence of his natural corruption, is incapable either of thinking or doing any good thing; and that therefore, it is necessary, in order to his conversion and salvation, that he be regenerated and renewed by the operation of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God through Jesus Christ.

IV. That the divine grace or energy of the Holy Ghost begins and perfects everything that can be called good in man, and consequently, all good works are to be attributed to God alone; that, nevertheless, this grace is offered to all, and does not force men to act against their inclinations, but may be resisted and rendered ineffectual by perverse will of the impenitent sinner.

V. That God gives to the truly faithfull who are regenerated by his grace the means of preserving themselves in this state. But the regenerate may lose their Justifying faith, fall from the state of grace, and die in their sins.

I made no farther observation on the doctrines of Calvinism than
Just to state them that it might be seen what it was we dissented from, but endeavoured to illustrate the doctrines held by the Armenians and to establish them from Scripture—some of the Baptist came expecting that I was going into controversy with them but as I only dwelt upon our own doctrines and let theirs alone, they were disappointed, and had nothing to say. But this was not my intention: for I was convinced that it was their design to draw us into controversy, and it was my intention to avoid it not seeing that any good at present could result from it.

PLAN OF UNION (1801)

The specific provisions of the Plan of Union between the Presbyterians and Congregationalists are quoted from Sweet's Religion on the American Frontier (Vol. III, 1939), page 15:

1st. It is strictly enjoined on all missionaries to the new settlements, to endeavor by all proper means, to promote mutual forbearance and accommodation, between those inhabitants of the new settlements who hold the Presbyterians, and those who hold the Congregational form of Church government.

2nd. If in the new settlements, any Church of the Congregational order, shall settle a minister of the Presbyterian order, according to Congregational principles, settling their difficulties among themselves, or by a council mutually agreed upon for that purpose. But if any difficulty shall exist between the minister and the Church or any member of it, it shall be referred to the Presbytery to which the minister and the Church shall belong, provided both parties agree to it; if not, to a council consisting of equal number of Presbyterians and Congregationalists, agreed upon by both parties.

3rd. If a Presbyterian Church shall settle a minister of Congregational principles, that Church may still conduct their discipline according to Presbyterian principles; excepting that if a difficulty arise between him and his Church, or any member of it, the cause shall be tried by the Association to which the said minister shall belong, provided both parties agree to it: otherwise by a council, one half Congregationalists and the other half Presbyterians, mutually agreed on by the parties.

4th. If any congregation consist partly of those who hold Congregational form of discipline, and partly of those who hold the Presbyterian form, we recommend to both parties, that this be no obstruction to their uniting in one church and settling a minister; and that in this case, the Church choose a standing committee from the communicants of said church, whose business it shall be, to call to account
every member of the church who shall conduct himself inconsistently with the laws of Christianity, and to give judgment on such conduct; and if the person condemned by their judgement be a Presbyterian, he shall have liberty to appeal to the Presbytery; if a Congregationalist, he shall have liberty to appeal to the body of the male communicants of the church; in the former case, the determination of the Presbytery shall be final unless the Church consent to a further appeal to the Synod, or to the General Assembly, and in the latter case, if the party condemned shall wish for a trial by a mutual council, the cause shall be referred to such a council. And provided the said standing committee of any church shall depute one of themselves to attend the Presbytery, he may have the same right to sit and act in the Presbytery, as a ruling elder of the Presbyterian church.

CONFESSION OF FAITH OF PIGEON CHURCH

The last page of the minute book of Pigeon Church (Baptist), which records the activities of the church during the Lincoln residence in Indiana, sets forth the following confession of faith. Quoted from Tarbell's In the Footsteps of the Lincolns (1924), page 144:

We believe in one God the father the word and the Holy Ghost, who hath created all things that are created by the word of his power for his pleasure.

We believe the old and New Testaments are the word of God and there are every thing contained therein necessary for our salvation and rule of faith and practice.

We believe in the fall of man in his public head and that is incapable of recovery unless restored by Christ.

We believe in election by grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world began and that God calls regenerates and sanctifies who are made meet for glory by his special grace.

We believe the righteous will persevere through grace to glory, and none of them finally fall away.

We believe in a general resurrection of the Just and unjust and the joys of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked are eternal.

We believe that good works are the fruits of Grace and follow after justification.
We believe that Baptism and the Lord's supper are ordinances of Jesus Christ and that true believers are the only proper subjects and the only proper mode of Baptism is immersion.

We believe the washing of feet is a command to be complied with when opportunity serves.

We believe it is our duty severally to support the Lord's table and that we ought to administer the Lord's supper at least twice a year.

We believe that no minister ought to preach the gospel, that is not called and sent of God, and they are to be proved by hearing them, and we allow none to preach amongst us but such as are well recommended and that we ought to contribute to him who faithfully labors among us in word and doctrines according to our several abilities of our temporal things.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM H. ROBERTS

The following statement of Roberts is quoted from Johnson's Abraham Lincoln the Christian (1913), pages 13-15:

It was my privilege as a young man to have known Abraham Lincoln. Entering the service of the United States government in the fall of 1863, the first Sabbath of my sojourn in Washington City I went to the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church. When the time for the long prayer came, according to immemorial usage in many Presbyterian congregations, a number of the men stood up for prayer, and among those upright figures I noticed in particular that of the President of the United States. As a member of the New York Avenue Church I was seated not far from Mr. Lincoln at Sunday services for a year and a half, and his attitude was always that of an earnest and devout worshiper. He was also an attendant at the weekly meeting, though for a considerable period taking part in the services privately. It having become known that he was an attendant at the prayer meeting, many persons would gather in or near the church at the close of the service in order to have access to him for various purposes. Desiring to put an end to these unwelcome interruptions, the Rev. Dr., Phineas D. Gurley, the pastor of Mr. Lincoln, arranged to have the President sit in the pastor's room, the door of which opened upon the lecture room, and there Mr. Lincoln would take a silent part in the service. He informed his pastor on several occasions that he had received great comfort from the meetings, and for the reason that they had been characterized more by prayer than by the making of addresses.

Dr. Gurley bore repeated testimony to myself and to other members
of the church of the deeply religious character of Mr. Lincoln, and it is with pleasure that I add this brief testimony from my own experience and observation to the far more extended tributes to Mr. Lincoln as a Christian given in this work, reverently prepared by my colaborer in the kingdom of God, the Rev. William J. Johnson, D. D.

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

The Foreword is dated November 26, 1912.

REPLY OF LINCOLN TO THE CHICAGO MINISTERS

The following excerpt of Lincoln's reply to the emancipation memorial presented by the Chicago Christians of all Denominations, dated September 13, 1862, is based on the signed report of William W. Patton and John Dempster, the ministers who heard Lincoln's remarks. Quoted from Basler's edition of The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (Vol. V, 1953), pages 419-20:

The subject presented in the memorial is one upon which I have thought much for weeks past, and I may even say for months. I am approached with the most opposite opinions and advice, and that by religious men, who are equally certain that they represent the Divine will. I am sure that either the one or the other class is mistaken in that belief, and perhaps in some respects both. I hope it will not be irreverent for me to say that if it is probable that God would reveal his will to others, on a point so connected with my duty, it might be supposed he would reveal it directly to me; for, unless I am more deceived in myself than I often am, it is my earnest desire to know the will of Providence in this matter. And if I can learn what it is I will do it! These are not, however, the days of miracles, and I suppose it will be granted that I am not to expect a direct revelation. I must study the plain physical facts of the case, ascertain what is possible and learn what appears to be wise and right. The subject is difficult, and good men do not agree. For instance, the other day four gentlemen of standing and intelligence (naming one or two of the number) from New York called, as a delagation, on business connected with the war; but, before leaving, two of them earnestly beset me to proclaim general
emancipation, upon which the other two at once attacked them! You
know, also, that the last session of Congress had a decided majority
of anti-slavery men, yet they could not unite on this policy. And
the same is true of the religious people. Why, the rebel soldiers
are praying with a great deal more earnestness, I fear, than our
own troops, and expecting God to favor their side; for one of our
soldiers, who had been taken prisoner, told Senator Wilson, a few
days since, that he met with nothing so discouraging as the evident
sincerity of those he was among in their prayers, ... .

FRAGMENT ON PRO-SLAVERY THEOLOGY

The following statement of Lincoln was probably written on
October 1, 1858. Basler retains the same date as Nicolay and Hay "in
the absence of evidence to the contrary." The fragment is quoted from
Basler's edition of The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (Vol. III,
1953), pages 204-05:

Suppose it is true, that the negro is inferior to the white, in
the gifts of nature; is it not the exact reverse justice that the
white should, for that reason, take from the negro, any part of the
little which has been given him? "Give to him that is needy" is the
Christian rule of charity; but "Take from him that is needy" is the
rule of slavery.

The sum of pro-slavery theology seems to be this: "Slavery is
not universally right, nor yet universally wrong; it is better for
some people to be slaves; and, in such cases, it is the Will of God
that they be such."

Certainly there is no contending against the Will of God; but
still there is some difficulty in ascertaining, and applying it, to
particular cases. For instance we will suppose the Rev. Dr. Ross
has a slave named Sambo, and the question is "Is it the Will of God
that Sambo shall remain a slave, or be set free?" The Almighty
gives no audible answer to the question, and his revelation--the
Bible--gives none--or, at most, none but such as admits of a
squabble, as to it's meaning. No one thinks of asking Sambo's
opinion on it. So, at last, it comes to this, that Dr. Ross is to
decide the question. And while he considers it, he sits in the
shade, with gloves on his hands, and subsists on the bread that
Sambo is earning in the burning sun. If he decides that God Wills
Sambo to continue a slave, he thereby retains his own comfortable
position; but if he decides that God Wills Sambo to be free, he
thereby has to walk out of the shade, throw off his gloves, and
delve for his own bread. Will Dr. Ross be actuated by that perfect impartiality, which has ever been considered most favorable to correct decisions?

But, slavery is good for some people!!! As a good thing, slavery is strikingly peculiar, in this, that it is the only good thing which no man ever seeks the good of, for himself.

Nonsense! Wolves devouring lambs, not because it is good for their own greedy maws, but because it is good for the lambs!!!

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1 According to Basler: "Lincoln probably refers to the Reverend Frederick A. Ross, whose Slavery Ordained of God (Philadelphia, 1857) and numerous speeches on the subject placed him among the forefront of clergyman defending the peculiar institution."
THE JAMES SMITH LETTER

James Smith, pastor of the Lincolns in Springfield, was appointed by President Lincoln as the American consul to Dundee, Scotland. While still stationed there in 1867, Smith received an enquiry from William H. Herndon relative to Smith's interpretation of Lincoln's religion. The Chicago Tribune, March 7, 1867, quoted Herndon's letter to Smith, December 20, 1866. The following excerpts reveal the nature of Herndon's enquiry:

Did the Reverend James Smith have "any writings—letters or other such like evidence" to show that Lincoln was won to a "belief that the Bible was God's special miraculous revelation"? ... "why didn't he join your Church, the 1st Presbyterian Church of the city of Springfield?" "I knew you as a gentleman in this city for several years," Herndon concluded his letter. "I knew you as a Christian. As you were a gentleman before you were a Christian, I ask you in that capacity first to answer these questions, if you please, and then I ask you ditto as a Christian to answer the questions—if you please."¹

Smith's reply to Herndon was printed in the Springfield Journal of March, 1867. The following extracts are pertinent to the issue:

East Cainto, Scotland, 21st Jan. 1867

W. H. Herndon, Esq.:

SIR—Your letter of the 20th Dec. was duly received. In it you ask me to answer several questions in relation to the illustrious President, Abraham Lincoln. With regard to your second question, I beg leave to say it is a very easy matter to prove that while I was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of 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

¹ Donald, LH, p. 236.
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 pre-eminently an upright man—ever ready, so far as in his power, to render unto all their dues.

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

Sir, I am with due respect your obedient servant,

JAS. SMITH.

N. B.—It will no doubt be gratifying to the friends of Christianity to learn that very shortly after Mr. Lincoln became a member of my congregation, at my request, in the presence of a large assembly at the annual meeting of the Bible Society of Springfield, he delivered an address the object of which was to unculcate 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."1

J. S.

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND CHRISTIANITY

Abstract of a Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

BOSTON UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL

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1954
What was the religion of Abraham Lincoln? This question is an open field of enquiry for the students of Lincolniana. Numerous attempts have been made to account for the significant impact of his life upon humanity by examining the nature of his religious faith; however, the problem has not been adequately resolved. An adequate answer to this question is tantamount to an understanding of the greatness of his life.

Why did Lincoln refuse to become a member of the Christian church? This question presents a challenge not only to Lincoln scholars; it is an issue that confronts the church historian, theologian, and philosopher. Moreover, the problem challenges organized Christianity to consider the basic reasons why Lincoln did not identify himself as a member of the church.

In an attempt to provide a fresh insight into the nature of Lincoln's religious faith, this dissertation proposed to examine historically his relationship to Christianity. A survey of the historic development of Christianity in America, especially the frontier church, was presented to provide an adequate understanding of his religious environment. Standard works of the Lincoln scholars were critically examined to ascertain the validity of their conclusions relative to his religious faith. The collected writings of Lincoln were specifically investigated to determine the basic characteristics of his religion.

A survey of the frontier church revealed the Calvinistic aspects of Protestantism. Adherence to correct doctrine, the example of a worthy life, and a personal religious experience characterized organized Christianity. Varying degrees of religious conformity attendant to church membership resulted in an unprecedented rise of denominationalism. The successive
stages of religious awakenings were marked by the evangelistic endeavors of revivalism.

By the time Lincoln was born organized Christianity was well established in the frontier states and territories. While the major denominations were in existence on the frontier, the Baptists formed the immediate religious environment of Lincoln during his early life. His parents were members of the Little Mount Church in Kentucky and the Pigeon Church in Indiana. His paternal ancestry, Samuel Lincoln of Massachusetts, Mordecai Lincoln of Pennsylvania, and Abraham Lincoln the grandfather, were churchmen. While the influence of heredity cannot be evaluated conclusively, it is significant that the paternal background of Lincoln was religious. From the standpoint of heredity, home training, and church environment there was no lack of religious influence in his life.

What was the relationship of Lincoln to Christianity? An adequate answer to this question is dependent upon a critical analysis of the testimony of his contemporaries, his relationship to the church, and his writings. Writers who have followed the Holland tradition have attempted to portray Lincoln as an orthodox Christian. Herndon and his followers, on the other hand, have depicted him as an unorthodox Christian.

According to Holland, an orthodox Christian believed in the basic tenets of the prevailing Christian doctrines. Herndon believed that Lincoln rejected the Christian orthodoxy of his time. The issue concerning the religion of Lincoln was joined in considerable controversy as a result of Herndon's claim. He maintained that Lincoln denied the inspiration of the Bible, disbelieved that Christ was God, and rejected the
Calvinistic concept of sin and salvation. The two ministers with whom Lincoln was chiefly associated, James Smith and Phineas D. Gurley, were disappointed that he declined church membership; however, they affirmed their belief that he was essentially orthodox in his Christian faith. Barton took a position that was moderate between Holland and Herndon, yet he maintained that Lincoln never outgrew his Calvinistic background.

There is no evidence that Lincoln was inclined to attend church regularly until after the death of his second son, Eddie, in 1850. However, the evidence of his writings indicate that he was familiar with the theology, organization, and evangelism of the church. In 1846 he refuted an accusation that he was an infidel. He readily admitted that he was not a member of the Christian church, and he expressly implied his respect for organized Christianity; however, there was no intimation that he intended to become a member of the church. Moreover, he did not evidence any feelings of guilt because he was not a member of the church.

After the tragic impact of Eddie's death, Lincoln rented a pew in the First Presbyterian Church in Springfield. His wife became a member of the church, but he refused to join. When he moved to Washington he attended the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church with his family and became closely associated with the pastor, Phineas D. Gurley. The evidence that he attended church in Springfield and in Washington establishes the fact that he recognized the corporate value of public worship. During the war years he requested the cooperation of the church and indicated his appreciation of the prayers delivered on his behalf; yet his respect for the church was not conducive to warrant a willingness to identify himself as a member of the church.
What did Lincoln believe? God was a personal reality in his religious experience. Due to his Calvinistic background he retained to a certain extent the philosophical forms of Calvinism; however, the content of his faith was primarily ethical. He believed in the providence of God in terms of cooperating will and love. He advocated human freedom and it is evident that he maintained that man could and should cooperate with the will of God. While no clearly defined system of theology can be attributed to Lincoln, it is evident that the centrality of love was to him more important than the doctrine of the sovereign will of God. There is no conclusive evidence that he accepted the Calvinistic doctrines of unconditional election, atonement limited to the elect, total depravity, irresistible grace, or the perseverance of the saints; moreover, he did not adhere to the theology of Arminianism. In fact, his religious faith did not conform to a specific system of Christian doctrine.

The faith of Lincoln developed primarily through his experience and understanding of ethical love. His references to the will of God, while couched in Calvinistic terminology, were attempts to learn the nature of God as exemplified in the life of Jesus. He believed that Jesus had achieved the highest human degree of moral perfection. The Bible contained the ethical principles by which humanity should live. It is apparent that Lincoln believed in the loving nature of God, and his own life was the evidence of his belief in the dignity and worth of human beings.

CONCLUSIONS

The Christian church of the nineteenth century could not claim Lincoln as a member. This fact is significant not only to an understanding
of Lincoln; it is important to an evaluation of the Christian church.

Organized Christianity presented a barrier to the religious faith of Lincoln because its institutional form and theological content had subordinated the ethical essence of the spirit of Jesus. Lincoln accepted the Jesus of history, but he could not accept the church's concept of the Christ of faith.

Membership in the Christian church was contingent on the individual's acceptance of church doctrine and his obedience to church discipline. Lincoln did not consider the acceptance of the prevailing Calvinistic and Arminian doctrines as essential to Christian faith.

Lincoln attended church and he respected the organizations of Christianity, but the primary basis of his religious faith was sought outside the framework of the Christian church. His approach to faith was through life itself—a realization of the eternal values of life under God through human experience.

The right of individual conscience in experiencing religious faith was fundamental to Lincoln. According to his belief, faith and reason were joined in importance. He denied the assumption that by virtue of its alleged divine origin, the church had exclusive authority to interpret the will of God.

He deplored the divisive aspects of denominationalism that undermined the concept of brotherhood taught by Jesus. He recognized that the exclusive claims of the churches based on theology and polity did not foster a spirit of brotherhood. He could not justify the division of the churches over the issue of slavery.

Lincoln was a Christian, but his Christian faith was not in con-
formity with the institutional Christianity of his time. He was a follower of Jesus in the sense that he loved God and humanity. Lincoln believed that the way of Jesus was infinitely larger and more meaningful than the example exhibited by the church.

Although church membership was not important to him as a requisite to the Christian life, he did indicate that he would gladly join the church that specifically advocated adherence to the Two Great Commandments as the sole qualifications for membership. In his belief that ethical love transcended all other religious aspects of the Christian faith, Lincoln recognized that the living spirit of Jesus could not be contained in the rigid form of church doctrine. Thus his concept of God, Jesus, and man—the new wine of his faith—could not be contained in the old wineskins of organized Christianity.
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
Kermit Escus White, son of William E. and Ella (Huffman) White, was born November 28, 1918, at Layland, West Virginia. He graduated from Nuttall High School in 1937 and received the Bachelor of Arts degree from Concord State College in 1943. While in college he served various Methodist churches as a supply preacher.

In 1943 he enrolled at Boston University School of Theology. After completing one year of seminary study he was ordained by the West Virginia Methodist Conference in 1944 for the purpose of becoming an army chaplain in World War II. In the same year he was commissioned as a first lieutenant in the Chaplain Corps and was later promoted to the rank of captain. He completed the school for chaplains at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, and was assigned to Camp Roberts, California. After four months of duty in the United States he was ordered to the South Pacific.
He qualified as a parachutist and served with the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regimental Combat Team in the Philippines. During his tour of duty as a chaplain paratrooper he was awarded the Philippine Liberation Medal, the Presidential Unit Citation, and one Battle Star. In 1945 he served in the Army of Occupation of Japan with the 11th Airborne Infantry Division. While in Japan he married Major Velda Miller, a member of the Army Nurse Corps, in 1947.

After his separation from the army in 1947 he returned to Boston University School of Theology and received the Bachelor of Sacred Theology degree in 1949. In 1949 he enrolled as a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at the Boston University Graduate School. During this time he was the minister of the Franklin Methodist Church in Brockton, Massachusetts. In 1950 he was called as the minister of the Congregational Church in North Chelmsford, Massachusetts.

When the war in Korea began in 1950 he was recalled to active duty in November, 1950. After serving with the 9th Infantry Division at Fort Dix, New Jersey, he was ordered to Korea in August, 1951. While in Korea he served with the United Nations' forces as a member of the 7th Infantry Division. During this tour of duty he received the following awards: one Bronze Star with the "V" device for valor in combat; one Oakleaf Cluster for meritorious service; and one Battle Star.

He returned from Korea in 1952, was separated from the army, resumed his previous Congregational pastorate, and continued his graduate studies at Boston University Graduate School.