

# LINCOLN LORE

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## LINCOLN—A COSMOPOLITAN CHRISTIAN

The beginning of the Lenten season invites a review of some of the religious bodies with which the Lincoln family came in contact. It is well known that Abraham Lincoln was not a member of any church group, yet he was a man of profound faith in God. It is the purpose of this monograph to arrange chronologically a compilation of testimonies in which various denominations have set forth their claims of having influenced Lincoln at some time in his life. A summary of these allegations might allow us to think of Lincoln as a cosmopolitan Christian.

### QUAKER

Lincoln prepared a biographical sketch for John Locke Scripps in which he wrote: "The family (Lincolns) were originally Quakers, though in later times they have fallen away from the peculiar habits of that people." We have not discovered that any of Lincoln's direct ancestors were members of that body although some of the Pennsylvania Lincolns intermarried with the Quakers. When Herbert Hoover became President the Society of Friends claimed two chief executives, Lincoln and Hoover.

### METHODIST

The parents of Lincoln were married by a Methodist clergyman, Jesse Head, and when Thomas Lincoln married his second wife another minister of that church, John L. Rogers, performed the ceremony. When Lincoln became President, the Foundry Methodist Church at Washington, where Lincoln was in attendance on a special occasion, by subscriptions collected at the time, made the President a Life Director of its Missionary Society. The Methodist Bishop Simpson spoke the last eulogy over the body of Lincoln at Springfield, Illinois.

### BAPTIST

Lincoln's parents very early affiliated with the Little Mount Separate Baptist Church in Kentucky which was an anti-slavery organization. After the President's death his widow wrote: "My husband's heart was naturally religious, he had often described to me his noble mother—the prayers she offered up for him." During the Indiana days the father Thomas joined Pigeon Baptist Church by letter from Kentucky and his second wife joined by experience. Abraham's sister affiliated with the church about the time of her wedding and it was customary for young people to postpone church membership until establishing a home. Abraham did not marry until he was thirty-three years old.

### CATHOLIC

Abraham Lincoln's first school teacher was Zachariah Riney, a member of the Catholic faith. Abe's Aunt Mary Mudd Lincoln and her son also named Abraham, the President's cousin, were also members of that church. A Eucharistic Congress was held in Chicago in 1927 and Cardinal Muehleisen according to the press, stated: "When Father St. Cyr came to say mass for Lincoln's stepmother, Mr. Lincoln (Abraham, the President) would prepare the altar himself. Indeed with his own hands Abraham carved out six wooden chairs to be used at the mass." Apparently stepmother was confused with aunt.

### DISCIPLES

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Lincoln after settling in Illinois affiliated with the Disciples of Christ or Christian Church and they both died members of this church. A reminiscence of Rev. John O. Kane, a well known minister of the Christian Church stated: "I baptised him (Abraham Lincoln) in a creek near Springfield, Illinois. . . . I placed his name on the church book. He lived and died a member of the Church of Christ." (Name does not appear on register.) Dr. Edward Scribner Ames, minister of the University Church of Disciples in Chi-

cago stated in a sermon: "Lincoln could very well be a member of this church. Why not take him in." The following year Dr. Ames unveiled a Lincoln bust and concluded the ceremonies with the statement, "Mr. Lincoln we receive you into the membership and fellowship of this church."

### EPISCOPALIAN

An Episcopalian clergyman of Springfield, Illinois, Rev. Charles Dresser officiated at the wedding of Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd. Later Lincoln purchased the rectory from Dr. Dresser and lived in that home during the Springfield years. Approaching the choir in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York there has been prepared in the parapet a series of twenty recesses each representing a century in the Christian era. The niche prepared for the nineteenth century contains a statuette of Abraham Lincoln suggesting that he had contributed most to Christian civilization during that century.

### PRESBYTERIAN

Mrs. Abraham Lincoln was a member of the Presbyterian Church at Springfield, Ill. and Mr. Lincoln, although not a formal member, served in different capacities for the church. During the Washington days both Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln attended the New York Ave. Presbyterian Church and rented a pew in the church which now bears a memorial tablet. Mrs. Sydney Lauck, for seventy years a member of the church said on the information of Dr. Gurley, the minister, that Abraham Lincoln "but for the assassin who took his life would have made public profession of his faith in Christ on Easter 1865."

### CONGREGATIONALIST

Dr. W. E. Barton, a leading Congregationalist minister, gave an address at Illinois College at Jacksonville, Ill. On the assumption that Ann Rutledge before her death was planning to attend the Jacksonville Female College, and also assuming that Lincoln would have followed her and attended the Illinois College, Dr. Barton ventured this conclusion: "It requires no vivid stretch of the imagination to think of Abraham Lincoln as emerging from Illinois College as a Congregational minister." Dr. Barton further observed that Lincoln's early training "would have made him familiar with the Congregational form of church government."

### SPIRITUALIST

The *St. Louis Globe Democrat* on March 31, 1896 in reporting the Progressive Spiritualists Convention at Springfield, Mo. stated that a delegate claimed: "Lincoln, as is well established by history, was a firm believer in Spiritualism as any member of the association." Another delegate commented: "It would hardly be fair to designate Lincoln as a spiritualist, though he is known to have accepted in a general way the truths of our religion." In 1891 Nellie C. Maynard published a 264 page book entitled "Was Abraham Lincoln a Spiritualist?"

### UNITARIAN

The American Unitarian Association issued a leaflet under the caption "He Never Joined a Church" in which it is stated "I think that Lincoln could have been a Unitarian if he had been aware of the freedom of belief, the right of every man to think for himself on matters of religion."

### UNIVERSALIST

Dr. Frank O. Hall of New York according to a report of a sermon stated: "We Universalists like to remember that Lincoln believed in the ideals our church stands for. He was a predestinarian, and his Calvinistic faith made him practically a Universalist."