

**Bangor University**

## **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

The Place of the Bible in Abraham Lincoln's Career

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*Award date:*  
2014

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**The Place of the Bible in Abraham Lincoln's  
Career**

**Derek W. Talbot**

**Thesis submitted to the University of Bangor for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
2014**

**An examination of the place of the Bible in the  
political speeches and writings of Abraham  
Lincoln**

## Abstract

This thesis is an examination of the place of the Bible in Abraham Lincoln's political career. Lincoln is one of the most celebrated historical figures of the past 200 years, and his speeches and writings are a major part of his legacy. Lincoln employed the text and message of the Bible more than any other American President. This research examines the entire contents of the *Collected Works*, in order to better understand his engagement with the Bible. Lincoln used the Bible with considerable skill, seeking to apply it to situations of national importance; he was unpredictably selective in his use of the Bible, but generally he chose material that would add what he considered to be the highest authority to his delivery.

The issue of Lincoln and the Bible is usually consumed by the endless debate regarding the nature of his personal beliefs. This research concentrates upon his use of the Bible; the material he selected and the way that he used it are evaluated in the light of both earlier and recent scholarship. During the examination of Lincoln's unprecedented use of the Bible, understanding is sought of the question of essentiality. What role did the Bible play in Lincoln's career? Was it simply literary adornment of his compositions or something profound? This thesis will offer the suggestion that Lincoln's use of the Bible was an essential influence upon his illustrious career and legacy. This research has discovered new material that calls into question the claims of William Herndon, which have deflected historians away from the possibility that Lincoln's message, his view of the American Civil War and the Republic's destiny would have been different without his use of the Bible.

## Acknowledgements

In completion of this thesis I wish to extend my gratitude to the following people.

Dr Keith Warrington. My Doctoral Supervisor who has inspired me and made this an experience rather than a task.

A number of people have patiently read sections of my work and provided invaluable feedback. I would like to thank the members of Dr Warrington's Doctoral studies group, and my sister-in-law Lynette Taylor. I also wish to extend my gratitude to Dr Martin Clay who provided valuable guidance during the final stages of my research.

John Harris of T. Cribb and Sons, for his friendship and practical support during this journey.

Dr James Cornelius, Jennifer Ericson, and Marry Ann Pohl from the Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois. Their expertise, kindness, and generosity allowed me to look at Lincoln from much closer quarters. This was invaluable to my research.

This journey has involved considerable sacrifices of time, which would otherwise have been spent with those I love. I want to express heartfelt gratitude to my family for their constant support. My wonderful parents David and Joy Talbot, for their love and prayerful support. My brothers Roger, Nick, and Andrew with their families. I also want to thank my father-in-law Brin Taylor and my lovely mother-in-law Doreen Taylor, who sadly passed away during the completion of this thesis.

Most importantly I want to thank my wife Lou. Throughout this experience I simply could not have managed without her help, support, strength, humour and love, which I will always need.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Introduction

President Abraham Lincoln died from the effect of a gunshot wound at 7.22 a.m. on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1865, which happened to be Good Friday.<sup>1</sup> This gave impetus to the formation of the myth of Lincoln as the man who gave himself for the freedom of all his countrymen.<sup>2</sup> There is no question that Lincoln's prosecution of the American Civil War, the resulting emancipation of the slaves, and the preservation of the Union, had guaranteed him a place of significant importance in historical memory. However, as with others whose famous lives are cut tragically short, objectivity was soon lost, as Lincoln became an almost mythical figure. This research will seek to discover something of the truth about one particular aspect of Lincoln's political career, his use of the Bible.

### 1.2. Thesis

It is a fact of history that Abraham Lincoln used the Bible more than any other American President.<sup>3</sup> Lincoln's subsequent status as one of the dominant figures in western history means that he would become one of the most prominent people to publically use the Bible. This fact alone requires careful examination, and is therefore of interest to both theologians and historians.

This research will undertake a thorough examination of Lincoln's use of the Bible in his political speeches and writings, with the express purpose of assessing the importance of such to Lincoln's achievements. Lincoln's use of the Bible will be discussed to determine any patterns of use, and the significance of those findings will be evaluated. The thesis to be defended revolves around the reasonable conclusion that Lincoln's use of the Bible was an essential aspect of his political influence.

---

<sup>1</sup> James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 61.

<sup>2</sup> Philip L. Ostergard, *The Inspired Wisdom of Abraham Lincoln: How Faith Shaped an American President* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), xvi.

<sup>3</sup> "Lincoln's legacy, far more than any other President, has, overtime, become inextricably bound up with the words and themes of the Bible." Earl Schwartz, "A Poor Hand To Quote Scripture: Lincoln And Genesis 3:19," *The Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 23, no. 2, (2002): 11. Guelzo expresses this thus, "Lincoln would also become the president best known through the nineteenth century for pouring public policy into the moulds of religious thought." Allen C. Guelzo, *Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President* (Grand Rapids: B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 18.

Research will demonstrate that Lincoln's engagement with the Bible was both skilful and slightly unconventional, and had a significant effect in defining Lincoln's thinking on matters of national importance.

Lincoln's engagement with the Bible was not a constant feature of his composition,<sup>4</sup> and when it does appear to occur it was not to preach or promote the Christian faith. Indeed, Lincoln's personal religious beliefs are still a matter of intense speculation.<sup>5</sup> This thesis will assert that whatever his personal condition of faith may have been, Lincoln did believe the Bible to be the highest authority available to mankind. He treated the Bible with great care, and generally used it as the apex of an argument, when he considered this highest authority was required. This thesis seeks to present the possibility that Lincoln's success, and certainly his legacy, would not have been as illustrious if he had not used the Bible.

### **1.3. Rationale**

The connection between Lincoln and the Bible is not often presented as a major feature of his career. This thesis will seek to demonstrate an intimate connection between Lincoln and the Bible, which is of more significance than generally acknowledged by modern scholars. The rationale for this thesis is centred on the importance of the Bible, and indeed the importance of Lincoln as an historical figure.

#### **1.3.1. Why Lincoln**

On the quasiquintennial of Lincoln's birth, Schaeffer wrote of Lincoln's abiding influence:

The flight of the years serves only to enhance his hold upon us; he has become so centrally fixed in our imaginations and our consciences, that he is far and away the most potent civic influence in American life today.<sup>6</sup>

Abraham Lincoln has not always been a natural choice for a study of a religious nature. He is rightly remembered as a political figure that adorns historical memory in

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<sup>4</sup> The progress of the thesis will explain that there were many occasions in which Lincoln did not quote or use the Bible, it was not something that he was always engaged in.

<sup>5</sup> Lincoln did not keep a diary, and White, in quotation of Herndon, acknowledges that, "He was the most ... shut-mouthed man that ever existed," adding that Lincoln was "comfortable with ambiguity," when it came to his personal life and beliefs. Ronald C. White, *A. Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 2009) Kindle edition, Locations 199-226.

<sup>6</sup> S. Carlyle Schaeffer, "Lincoln: His Destiny And Religion." *The Christian Century Pulpit*, February 1934.

a way that has transcended politics. The sectional crisis and the resulting American Civil War dominated Lincoln's entire Presidency.<sup>7</sup> The War was fought at horrific cost, but resulted in the preservation of the Union, with the resultant abolition of American chattel slavery. Whoever occupied the Executive Mansion during this cataclysmic period would have been remembered, but Lincoln's ultimately successful prosecution of the War and his untimely assassination would assure his prominent place in history. The years following Lincoln's death yielded an enormous literary examination of the Sixteenth President.<sup>8</sup> There has been exhaustive discussion, reflecting almost every imaginable aspect of Lincoln's career and personal life. Lincoln's legacy has inspired and inflamed strong and diverse commentary on most issues relating to him. However, the overwhelming consensus is that Lincoln was one of the greatest and most important figures in history. One aspect of Lincoln's legacy, which is of universal interest to scholars, is his speeches and writing.

Subsequent Presidents have employed Lincoln's quotations;<sup>9</sup> he has been a source for both Republican and Democratic incumbents. Gienapp described Lincoln as "the most eloquent president in our history."<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to note that Lincoln is famous for his individual speeches. Tourists in Washington DC will find the words

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<sup>7</sup> For the purpose of this thesis the American Civil War will be referred to simply as 'the War,' except on occasions when the context demands full ascription.

<sup>8</sup> On the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth, Senator George S. McGovern engaged discussion with Sean Wilentz. The dialogue's transcript is housed in the United States National Archives. McGovern states that, "16,000 books have been written about Abraham Lincoln."

<http://www.archives.gov/nae/news/featured-programs/090212McGovern-transcript.pdf>, accessed 22nd January 2012. In 2009 Elmore offered the following statement about Lincoln, "...more books have been written about him than any other person in history, except Jesus Christ and William Shakespeare." A.E. Elmore, *Lincoln's Gettysburg Address: Echoes of the Bible and Book of Common Prayer* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), 1. On 12<sup>th</sup> February 2009. McPherson stated that more books have been written about Lincoln than any other American, and he offers what he described as a "...common estimate," of 16,000 publications. James M. McPherson, "Lincoln off His Pedestal." *The New York Review of Books*, 24<sup>th</sup> September 2009. In 2012 the Ford's Theatre Centre for Leadership and Education, in Washington constructed a tower of books about Lincoln, it is 34 feet high and represents, "just a fraction," of published Lincoln works.

<http://www.fordstheatre.org/home/explore-lincoln/lincoln-book-tower>, accessed 11<sup>th</sup> June 2012. This fact is repeated in many works, the following are a selection thereof, D. Reid Ross, *Lincoln's Veteran Volunteers Win The War* (Albany: New York State University, 2008), 432; John Y. Simon, Harold Holzer, and Dawn Vogel, eds. *Lincoln Revisited: New Insights from the Lincoln Forum* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), iii; David H. Donald, *Lincoln Rediscovered* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1961. Reprint, New York: Vintage, 2001), 3.

<sup>9</sup> White offers the following quotation from Senator Everett Dirksen, "The first task of every politician is to get right with Lincoln." White, *Lincoln*, Location 192. The employment of Lincoln will be revisited in some small measure at appropriate moments in this thesis.

<sup>10</sup> William E. Gienapp, ed. *This Fiery Trial: The Speeches and Writings of Abraham Lincoln*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) Kindle edition, Location 92.

of two of Lincoln's most celebrated speeches inscribed on the Lincoln Memorial.<sup>11</sup> The fact that Lincoln did not keep a diary and was intensely private about his personal life has meant that what he said and wrote has become a uniquely important and revealing source in the attempt to understand him.

One of the most important speeches of Lincoln's career was his Second Inaugural Address.<sup>12</sup> In this address he made extensive and creative use of the Bible. The speech would in many ways define his Presidency, the War itself, and would set the tone for what Lincoln hoped could be a magnanimous reconstruction. This address was not an exception, and this research will trace Lincoln's use of the Bible from his earliest writing to the final speech he delivered. The importance of Lincoln's achievements, as well as his undoubted place in historical memory, makes Lincoln an important subject as a Bible user of considerable prowess.

### **1.3.2. The timeliness of the research**

During the undertaking of this research, both Lincoln and the Bible were the subject of important anniversaries, which were commemorated at the highest levels of American and British society.

#### **1.3.2.1. Lincoln anniversaries**

Both Lincoln and the War have recent and pending anniversaries. The 12<sup>th</sup> February 2009 marked the Bicentennial of Lincoln's birth. There were widespread and prominent celebrations to mark this anniversary.<sup>13</sup> The year 2011 marked the

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<sup>11</sup> The Lincoln Memorial, in Washington has the words of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and his Second Inaugural Address, inscribed on it. National Parks Service. "The Lincoln Memorial, Washington D.C." <http://www.nps.gov/linc/index.htm>, accessed 12th November 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Tackach states that while the Gettysburg Address is Lincoln's most famous speech, it the Second Inaugural Address which is his most revealing. James Tackach, *Lincoln's Moral Vision: The Second Inaugural Address* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002). While White considers it Lincoln's Greatest. Ronald C. White, *Lincoln's Greatest Speech: The Second Inaugural* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> Lincoln's Bicentennial was widely celebrated, particularly in the United States. Some examples of the importance and extent of the celebrations are listed. The United States Mint issued four different designs of One Cent coins for the anniversary. [http://www.usmint.gov/mint\\_programs/circulatingCoins/?action=CircPenny](http://www.usmint.gov/mint_programs/circulatingCoins/?action=CircPenny), accessed 29<sup>th</sup> January 2012. On the 12<sup>th</sup> February 2009 President Obama delivered a commemorative address on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. He also spoke at Springfield, Illinois, and attended the reopening of Washington's Ford's Theatre, the scene of Lincoln's assassination. Phillip Macon, The White House Blog. "Happy Birthday Abe," [http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog\\_post/happy\\_birthday\\_abe](http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog_post/happy_birthday_abe), accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2012. The extent of the commemorations required 48 State Governors to appoint a liaison officer to coordinate activities with the Abraham Lincoln Commission. <http://www.abrahamlincoln200.org/bicentennial/states.aspx>, accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2012.

Sesquicentennial of the outbreak of the War. The War extended from 1861 to 1865 and this initial anniversary would inaugurate a series of Sesquicentennial commemorations of key events until 2015.<sup>14</sup> These events would naturally encapsulate anniversaries of Lincoln's major contributions during the War.

### 1.3.2.2. Subsequent movies

A reflection of the interest that Lincoln still generates is seen in the release of two major movie productions. In 2010 Robert Redford directed a film examining the contribution of Mary Surratt to the events that resulted in Lincoln's assassination. The title of the film is *The Conspirator*, and it was placed on general release in April 2011.<sup>15</sup> On the 9<sup>th</sup> November 2012 Steven Spielberg released his latest film, simply entitled *Lincoln*, in which Daniel Day Lewis plays the title role.<sup>16</sup> The fact of this investment by such luminaries of the film industry suggests that there is a considerable interest in Lincoln, two centuries after his birth.

### 1.3.2.3. The King James Bible

The year 2011 witnessed a variety of high profile events commissioned to celebrate the Quadricentennial of the King James Bible.<sup>17</sup> This anniversary was also marked by

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<sup>14</sup> An exhaustive list of commemorations, to mark the Sesquicentennials of major Civil War engagements, and related events, are listed by The Civil War Trust. <http://www.civilwar.org/150th-anniversary/150-events>, accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2012. One of the key events of the Civil War era was the inauguration of Lincoln to the Presidency. On the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2011 President Obama issued a Presidential Proclamation in commemoration of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Inauguration. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/04/presidential-proclamation-150th-anniversary-inauguration-abraham-lincoln>, accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2012.

<sup>15</sup> *The Conspirator* featured actors James McAvoy, Robin Wright and Kevin Kline. The fact that the film was directed by a man with Redford's profile, and considering the quality of the cast, this was a major film, although not a significant financial success. <http://www.conspiratorthemovie.com>, accessed 26<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

<sup>16</sup> The film *Lincoln* is a product of Dream-Works Studios and also features Sally fields and Tommy Lee Jones. <http://www.dreamworkstudios.com/films/lincoln>, accessed 20<sup>th</sup> July 2012.

<sup>17</sup> In November 2010 Queen Elisabeth II delivered an address at the Inauguration of the New General Synod of The Church of England, in which she, "...emphasized the importance of the forthcoming 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of the Authorized Version of the Bible." <http://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/being-a-christian/celebrating-400-years-of-the-king-james-bible.aspx>, accessed 16<sup>th</sup> March 2011; On the Friday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2011 the Queen attended a service of thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey in celebration of the Anniversary. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-15752153>, accessed 20<sup>th</sup> January 2012. On Friday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2011 Prime Minister David Cameron delivered a speech in commemoration of the anniversary, in which he praised the achievement of the King James Bible and its contribution to the fabric of British life. <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/king-james-bible>, accessed 20<sup>th</sup> January 2012. Dr Rowan Williams delivered a televised message to the nation in which he emphasized the influence, which the translation has had on British Linguistic life. Message broadcast on BBC 1 on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011, <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/910/archbishop-of-canterburys-bbc-new-year-message-2011>, accessed 20<sup>th</sup> January 2012.



various significant publications, which went beyond the usual confines of the Christian community.<sup>18</sup>

#### **1.3.2.4. Contribution to the subject**

The anniversaries concerning Lincoln and the King James Bible have served to reinforce both as highly significant factors in modern history. This thesis will seek to demonstrate Lincoln's use of the Bible, which renders him one of the most famous people to have publically engaged with the Bible during the 400 years that the King James Bible has been in existence.

The efforts of most scholars who have sought to understand Lincoln's relationship with the Bible tend to do so with the intention of discovering the truth about his personal faith. Lincoln was extremely private about his beliefs, and a study of such will ultimately be somewhat inconclusive. What can be spoken of with a greater degree of certainty is the place of the Bible in Lincoln's writing and speeches. This thesis will conduct an exhaustive search for all of potential examples of Lincoln's use of the Bible, and offer evaluation thereof. The intention of this research is to concentrate on Lincoln's engagement with the Bible to discover the extent to which it influenced and ultimately shaped his political career. Some issues of Lincoln's personal beliefs will naturally arise in during this investigation, and will be duly considered. However, the objective is not to add another opinion to the vast amount of speculation as to whether Lincoln was a Christian.

The progress of this research will seek to demonstrate that as Lincoln progressed into the Presidency, the Bible played an increasingly important role in shaping his thinking and public address. It will be suggested that this ultimately affected some of his key political views, in particular his prosecution of the War. In establishing this case, another contribution will be made to this field of study. Evidence will be presented to make the case that Lincoln's political career would not have been as ultimately illustrious, both in his lifetime and historical memory, had he not used the Bible.

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<sup>18</sup> Examples of some publications, which marked the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the King James Bible, are as follows. Melvyn Bragg, *The Book of Books* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 2011) Kindle edition; Henry Barker, *English Bible Versions: A Tercentenary Memorial of the King James Version from the New York Bible and Common Prayer Book Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); David Norton, *The Kings James Bible: A Short History from Tyndale to Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Adam Nicolson, "The Bible Of King James." *National Geographic Magazine*, December 2011.

Another contribution to this subject will focus on William Herndon.<sup>19</sup> This thesis will state the case that the most serious objections to the idea that the Bible was a significant factor for Lincoln were originally driven by Herndon's treatment of the subject. This thesis will re-evaluate Herndon's contribution, in the light of a recent discovery made during the course of this research. This discovery will confirm that on the matter of Lincoln's use of the Bible, and indeed his beliefs, Herndon should be considered an unreliable commentator.

#### **1.4. Review of Literature**

A considerable portion of the vast body of Lincoln literature belongs to the investigation of Lincoln's religious beliefs, which includes his engagement with the Bible. In 1920, Barton considered that his own treatment of this subject was "dipping his net into a stream darkened by too much ink."<sup>20</sup> The writing of this thesis has benefitted from some excellent scholarship in the area of Lincoln's personal faith. The variety of strong opinion that exists regarding Lincoln's relationship with the Bible continues to spark debate. Peterson reflects on Lincoln's place in *American Memory* thus: "The search for the soul of Abraham Lincoln was never ending."<sup>21</sup>

This review will concentrate on five major works that have helped form the debate that examines key aspects of Lincoln's beliefs and use of the Bible. These books were written by William Barton, William Wolf, Wayne Temple, Allen Guelzo, and Richard Carwardine. The publication dates range between 1920 and 2003 and reflect the development of scholarly thinking and treatment of this subject. These volumes are the most often cited works by other Lincoln scholars who make reference to this subject. This list was finalised after consultation with Dr James Cornelius, Curator of the Lincoln Collection at the ALPL in Springfield, Illinois. Although the conclusion of this thesis will at times disagree with the findings of these scholars, their thoroughness and thought-provoking approach to this aspect of Lincoln's experience has been extremely useful.

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<sup>19</sup> William H. Herndon (1819-1891) was Lincoln's junior legal partner in Springfield Illinois. Although different in temperament the two enjoyed a successful professional partnership, and became good friends. Almost immediately after Lincoln's death, Herndon had the foresight to make extensive research into Lincoln's childhood, by conducting interviews with those who knew him in the frontier communities of his youth. Herndon produced an influential Biography of Lincoln, which was published in 1890.

<sup>20</sup> William E. Barton, *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: G.H. Doran Co., 1920), ix.

<sup>21</sup> Merrill D. Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 1994), 358.

This review will also refer to other contributions that address this subject in dedicated works, as well as those that consider the matter as part of a wider agenda. The approaches and conclusions of the works considered are in some ways different from that which will be offered in this thesis, a point that will be clarified a little more in the review's conclusion.

#### **1.4.1. William Barton**

The first five decades of Lincoln scholarship produced a rather polarized landscape of literature. There were some high profile offerings that presented Lincoln as a classical Evangelical Protestant believer while others, informed mainly by Herndon, presented the opposing view that he was something between a non-believer and a deist. In 1920 Barton published *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, which was a more nuanced work than had previously been produced. This was the first scholarly attempt to offer an exhaustive examination of Lincoln's religious beliefs. This is still a widely quoted reference work for students of Lincoln's faith and relationship with the Bible.

In contrast to his predecessors, Barton devotes a considerable percentage of his main text to engagement with the widely conflicting body of contemporary witness testimony regarding Lincoln's beliefs. Previous authors had sought to exploit these accounts to prove or discredit the claims that Lincoln's use of the Bible was evidence of a genuine Christian faith.<sup>22</sup> Barton considered possibilities that had been debated over the previous 55 years and formulated a list of what Lincoln 'was' and 'was not.'<sup>23</sup> He presents the case that the overwhelming majority of sermons that Lincoln heard or read were Baptist and Presbyterian.<sup>24</sup>

Barton built his case around the contemporary accounts of what Lincoln was reported to have said in quotation of the Bible, or in relation to his own beliefs. He did not engage in thorough examination of Lincoln's written words, indeed he did not specifically explore Lincoln's use of the Bible. Barton devoted an entire chapter to his credible contention that Lincoln was profoundly influenced by Smith's book.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The main text of Barton's book comprises 300 pages. He devoted 109 pages to examination and engagement with the witness testimonies and the issues raised thereby. He presents detailed and able treatment of the polarizing interaction between Herndon and Reed, which will be considered in Section 6.6.1.1. of this thesis.

<sup>23</sup> Barton claimed that Lincoln was not an atheist, a Catholic, a Spiritualist, a Quaker, a Unitarian, or a Freemason. Barton, *Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, 225-230; 231-232; 232-233; 236-237; 238 and 243.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.

<sup>25</sup> Rev Smith is examined in Section 4.5.1.2.5.1 of this thesis. James Smith, *The Christian's Defence, Containing a Fair Statement and Impartial Examination of the Leading Objections Urged by Infidels*,

Despite the importance of Smith's text to his case, Barton chose not to examine it.<sup>26</sup> Barton instead placed his reliance upon the testimonies of Lincoln's contemporaries to build his argument in support of Smith's influence.<sup>27</sup>

Barton's primary concentration was on the development of a greater understanding of Lincoln's personal religious beliefs. He considered Lincoln to be an Evangelical Christian. He addressed himself to the apparent contradiction between the faith he claimed Lincoln possessed and the fact that he never joined a church. Barton devoted Chapter 21 to this matter, concluding that Lincoln had set his mind "upon the application of his Christian principles [rather] than the proclamation of his religious opinions."<sup>28</sup>

Barton's contention was that Lincoln was not a theologian<sup>29</sup> but that he possessed theological opinions, and that these "opinions may have been reason to believe that he was a true Christian."<sup>30</sup> Having set forth this case, Barton conceded that the theological positions that Lincoln appeared to adhere to were rooted in the theology of his early experience: "The basis of his religious belief was Calvinism of the most rigid sort. It could accept some incidental features of other systems, but at heart it was Calvinistic."<sup>31</sup> Although Barton was the first scholar to present this suggestion, he failed to elaborate to any degree.

Barton's final chapter deals with the construction of what he describes as "The Creed of Abraham Lincoln."<sup>32</sup> He asserted that Lincoln never intended to formulate a creed, and that "he merely uttered as occasion seemed to him to demand such sentiments and principles as expressed those aspects of truth which he felt and believed to need expression at those particular times."<sup>33</sup> Barton formulated a 354-word creed<sup>34</sup> compiled entirely of Lincoln's words. This creed comprises essential elements that Barton considered definitive in establishing Lincoln's belief in

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*Against the Antiquity, Genuineness, Credibility and Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures* (Cincinnati: J.A. James, 1843).

<sup>26</sup> Although Barton does not deal with the content of Smith's book, he did present Smith Title Page and Table of Content. Barton, *Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, Appendix VII, 358-376.

<sup>27</sup> Barton not only used witness testimonies regarding Smith's book. He also furnishes thorough documentation of the considerable body of contemporary comment from those who attended Smith's church at the same time as Lincoln and his family.

<sup>28</sup> Barton, *Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, 259.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 23 and 291-300.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

the Divine Inspiration of the Bible. Barton has become an essential source for this subject, but it is his ‘creed’ that has been most often cited by subsequent publications.

#### 1.4.2. William Wolf

William Wolf published a much quoted and respected work, *The Almost Chosen People*, in 1959.<sup>35</sup> Peterson is typical in his assessment that Wolf’s work continues to be one of the most admired examinations of Lincoln’s religion.<sup>36</sup> However, he considered that Wolf’s conclusions were driven by a religious agenda, stating that “like previous clerical interpreters, Wolf set out to wrap Lincoln in the folds of Christianity.”<sup>37</sup> The truth is that Wolf presents the conclusion that President Lincoln was a deeply religious Christian. He acknowledged his debt to Barton and presented a complete transcript of his ‘creed.’<sup>38</sup> While accepting the importance of Barton’s creed, he points out the danger of separating Lincoln’s words from the context of his life and writings.<sup>39</sup>

Wolf’s approach is similar to Barton’s in that his main concentration is upon Lincoln’s use of the Bible, in so much as this pointed to the nature of his personal Christian faith. Wolf, like Barton, relied heavily upon contemporary witness testimony regarding Lincoln’s faith. Wolf utilized some of the witness testimony cited in Barton and included a number of newer discoveries.<sup>40</sup> Wolf did not rely on these testimonies as much as Barton did to construct his case. Wolf recognised that so much of this testimony had proved unreliable and “One could ‘prove’ about anything by selecting what he wanted from the sources.”<sup>41</sup> He asserted that “The fair minded investigator must finally admit that the only really reliable testimony, with a few exceptions, must be gleaned from Lincoln’s own speeches and letters.”<sup>42</sup> So Wolf’s work focused on aspects of what Lincoln had written or said, coupled with the most reliable witness testimony. Although his work is excellent, it was never intended to be

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<sup>35</sup> William J. Wolf, *The Almost Chosen People: A Study of the Religion of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Doubleday, 1959). This book was republished as *The Religion of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Seabury Press, 1963).

<sup>36</sup> Peterson, *American Memory*, 355.

<sup>37</sup> Peterson, *American Memory*, 359.

<sup>38</sup> Wolf, *Almost Chosen People*, 195-196.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>40</sup> An example of what was a new discovery to Wolf is the consideration of a devotional book in which Lincoln had inscribed his name. The book was only discovered two years before Wolf published his work. *Ibid.*, 108-109.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>42</sup> It is important to note that Wolf had an advantage over Barton provided by Basler’s *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, which was published six years prior to Wolf’s work.

an exhaustive examination of Lincoln's use of the Bible; his objective was to employ that which supported his well-crafted arguments in favour of Lincoln's Christianity.

Wolf's work is particularly noteworthy in its treatment of what he considered to be the discernible pilgrimage and development of Lincoln's faith. He acknowledged Lincoln's Christian heritage<sup>43</sup> and the youthful period of scepticism,<sup>44</sup> and then stated that he became more Christian in his thinking, especially as the War intensified. Wolf placed great importance upon Smith's influence in the development of Lincoln's Christian faith.<sup>45</sup> Wolf's assessment of Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address is that it represented the "climax of Lincoln's religious development."<sup>46</sup> Wolf addressed both Lincoln's reading of the Bible and his relationship with the established Churches of his day. Wolf sets out his concluding position that Lincoln's faith was based mostly upon his independent reading of the Bible, although conceding that there were unavoidable and inevitable ecclesiastical influences. Wolf also sought to present arguments that dealt with Lincoln's slightly uneasy relationship with the churches. Wolf conceded that for most Christians their primary vehicle of faith is the church, and their religious experience is reinforced by "Bible reading and personal experience."<sup>47</sup> Although acknowledging some of the formative influence of the Church in Lincoln's life, he asserted that the Bible itself was "his primary source of inspiration."<sup>48</sup>

Wolf took Barton's point about Calvinism a step further by addressing the issue of Lincoln's apparently fatalistic view of destiny and the will of God. He argued that this was not fatalism in a passive sense, but rather an understanding of the "biblical stress upon God's will."<sup>49</sup> Wolf suggested that Lincoln's thinking was directed in the most part by his reading and understanding of the Bible, while stating that Calvinism may have been a contributory factor. He reinforced his argument by pointing out that the largely Calvinistic Baptist preaching of Lincoln's youth would have influenced his thinking. Wolf does not argue that Lincoln was a Calvinist<sup>50</sup> but

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<sup>43</sup> Wolf, *Almost Chosen People*, 38-39

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-51.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 80-88.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 781

<sup>50</sup> "This is not to state that Lincoln accepted the system of Calvinism. It is merely to point out that Presbyterian preaching on this theme may have helped him to give greater logical precision to a fundamental insight acquired in youth from his Baptist environment, modified in a philosophical

that the preaching he heard in Springfield on the “Calvinistic doctrine of predestination”<sup>51</sup> would have contributed to his understanding of the will of God. Wolf saw a gradual expansion of this, stating that “personal experience and reflection would give him ever deepening insights into the relevance of scripture for personal decision and for understanding the meaning of history.”<sup>52</sup>

Wolf considered that Lincoln’s thinking on slavery was influenced by two major influences. The first was the Bible. He believed that Lincoln’s application of the Bible’s teaching to the issue of slavery was not simply as a code of morality. He stated that Lincoln’s objection to slavery was derived from “a theological understanding of the significance of work was quarried from the Bible.”<sup>53</sup> Wolf stated that the second major influence was the Declaration of Independence.<sup>54</sup>

Wolf described Lincoln as a “biblical Christian.”<sup>55</sup> He asserted that Lincoln’s private reading of the Bible had a discernible influence upon his political career: “From the Bible in a quite independent way he quarried granite to support a religious interpretation of American history and of man’s vast future.”<sup>56</sup> He referred to the Bible a great deal and built a case that suggested that Lincoln’s extensive use of the Bible in his political career was a strong indication of genuine Christian faith.

Wolf considered Lincoln’s relationship with the Bible to be of paramount importance in understanding him, stating that “the rock on which he stood was the Bible,”<sup>57</sup> and asserting that “no President has ever had the detailed knowledge of the Bible that Lincoln had.”<sup>58</sup> Having correctly identified this fact, he chose not to pursue a meaningful comparison between Lincoln and the other incumbents. However, as was the case with Barton, Wolf refers to Lincoln’s use of the Bible with almost no examination of the passages Lincoln used. Wolf pointed out the fact that many of Lincoln’s contemporaries believed that his use of the Bible was a genuine expression of his faith. He cited this as substantial proof that Lincoln was a Christian. Wolf’s intention to prove the validity of Lincoln’s Christian faith did not require an

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direction in New Salem and in the early years at Springfield, and again re-established in his later life as a primary biblical belief of his own." *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

exhaustive examination of his use of the Bible. He only offered a brief treatment of Lincoln's engagement with Scripture when it could be utilised as proof of personal faith. Wolf has become a respected authority on this subject, but his primary legacy appears to be his treatment of the accounts of those who knew Lincoln.

### 1.4.3. Wayne Temple

In 1995 Temple published *Abraham Lincoln: From Skeptic to Prophet*.<sup>59</sup> The respect with which this work is viewed is perhaps typified in McColley's review, which placed it in the "common sense tradition of empirical history, gathering data, subjecting it to critical scrutiny then arranging a narrative pattern informed by common-sense judgements and conclusions."<sup>60</sup> McColley was so impressed with Temple's thoroughness that he claimed it "supersedes previous useful studies of Lincoln's religion."<sup>61</sup>

Temple's work was exhaustive in a way that moved the debate into the examination of new areas of evidence. Temple not only considers Lincoln's religious background, he also looks into that of Mary Lincoln<sup>62</sup> and their ancestors. Temple also offers extensive research on the religious beliefs and affiliations of significant figures in Lincoln's life and career, including relatives, clergy, business associates, political allies and rivals in Illinois and Washington.<sup>63</sup> Temple also offers comprehensive descriptions of religious services Lincoln attended, including available sermons that were delivered.<sup>64</sup> He acknowledges the tensions that Barton and Wolf identified in Lincoln's relationship with the established churches of his day. He claimed that Lincoln was unimpressed with the expressions of denominational Christianity that he experienced:

It would appear that the logical 'railsplitter' could not abide ministers, congregations and theocratic assemblies which proclaim ritual, dogma and

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<sup>59</sup> Wayne C. Temple, *Abraham Lincoln: From Skeptic to Prophet* (Mahomet: Mayhaven Publishing, 1995).

<sup>60</sup> Robert McColley, "The Inner World of Abraham Lincoln, by Michael Burlingame and Abraham Lincoln: From Skeptic to Prophet, by Wayne C. Temple." *The Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 17, no. 2 (1996).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Temple, *Skeptic to Prophet*, 26 and 32-34.

<sup>63</sup> The term Cabinet Officers refers in the most part to those who served under Lincoln during the Presidential years.

<sup>64</sup> Temple, *Skeptic to Prophet*, 83-85.



creeds above truth, moral right, law and the simple love of God and fellowmen.<sup>65</sup>

Temple did however suggest that the development of Lincoln's Christian experience meant that in the final Springfield years and during the Presidency, Lincoln's church attendance had become a more formative experience. Lincoln's church activity is scrutinised, both his church attendance in Springfield<sup>66</sup> and his spasmodic attendance at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, Washington.<sup>67</sup>

Temple also acknowledged a sense that Lincoln's faith was the result of development that was largely due to his exposure to his reading of the Bible. He makes the case that the freethinking intelligence of Lincoln's youth led him into a period of scepticism.<sup>68</sup> Temple builds a case for Lincoln's spiritual reformation. He states that after 1854,<sup>69</sup> and especially during the War, Lincoln became increasingly devoted to the Bible and increasingly convinced with the idea that God was guiding the nation through his presidency. He offers an examination of the intensification of Lincoln's belief in dreams and visions.<sup>70</sup>

The primary focus of Temple's research was to discover the nature of Lincoln's religious beliefs. He goes to exhaustive lengths to demonstrate, from almost every conceivable angle, that Lincoln moved from cynicism to a deep faith that was overtly based on the teaching of the Bible. Temple cited witness testimony of Smith's "enlightening influence" upon Lincoln, stating that other clerics also made favourable impressions.<sup>71</sup> While presenting a case for Lincoln's strong Christian faith, Temple acknowledges that there is no conclusive evidence that Lincoln experienced an evangelical conversion.

Temple's treatment of Lincoln's use of the Bible is minimal. He only refers to the Bible when doing so would support his contentions regarding Lincoln's faith.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 158-222

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 140-145, 278-280 and 418-424.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 95-96, 284 and 302-303.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 15, 81 and 190.

<sup>72</sup> Temple's treatment of Lincoln's use of the Bible is typified in the following examples. The Biblical material in the Lyceum Address of 1838 is examined. He presents quotation from the Address as evidence of Lincoln's use of the Bible without considering it necessary to offer any evaluation. Another example is Temple's full quotation of Lincoln's "Proclamation of a Day of Prayer and Fasting," 12<sup>th</sup> August 1861. Although an entire quotation is offered Temple did not need to engage in deeper examination to fortify his contention. Ibid., 23; 164-165. Further examples are located in Ibid., 213-215; 225-226.

Instead of seeking understanding of the extent of Lincoln's use of the Bible, Temple sought to identify what he frequently describes as the "religious tone"<sup>73</sup> of his writings and speeches. A particular example of Temple's treatment of Lincoln's use of the Bible occurs in his treatment of the Second Inaugural Address. He identifies the Biblical quotations in the Address and concludes that: "Here, again, is Abraham Lincoln's religious creed in writing: God governing the world. And he was God's instrument. Who could still say that Lincoln was not a religious man?"<sup>74</sup>

Temple constructed a detailed case from ground-breaking background material coupled with contemporary witness testimony to prove that Lincoln was a "religious man."<sup>75</sup> He considered the evidence of his case proved Lincoln's unique place in Presidential history:

It seems appropriate that Lincoln seemingly the most truly religious man ever to sit in the White House- was the Chief Executive who approved a bill on April 22, 1864, which, for the very first time, placed the slogan 'In God We Trust' upon United State coinage.<sup>76</sup>

In the same manner as in the previous works, Temple states this point without expounding upon it.

The final sentence of the book summarizes the fruit of his exhaustive research: "We must conclude that Abraham Lincoln was indeed a most religious man and expressed his reverence for God in an unadulterated matter and very openly."<sup>77</sup> The most obvious achievement of Temple's work is his research on the religious context of almost every conceivable aspect of Lincoln's life and career.

#### **1.4.4. Allen Guelzo**

Four years after Temple's work, Allen Guelzo published *Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President*. Guelzo's conclusions were different from the previous scholars'. He presents a robust argument that Lincoln was by no means a religious man and certainly no Christian. Guelzo thought that Lincoln was unable to discover any conclusive spiritual truth and perhaps in reference to the title of Temple's work

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 281.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>75</sup> Temple employed the phrase "religious man" to describe Lincoln on numerous occasions. Temple does not offer particular definition of this term.

<sup>76</sup> Temple, *Skeptic to Prophet*, 265.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

declared that he was neither “a convert [n]or a prophet.”<sup>78</sup> Guelzo offers more detailed coverage of what he considered to be Lincoln’s disdain for the majority of the clerics of his day: “It was not preachers, but actors, humorists and poets whose company Lincoln enjoyed.”<sup>79</sup>

Guelzo is keen to use the context of Lincoln’s religious experience to reveal his personal beliefs. He correctly identifies the Second Great Awakening as the wider context to the Christian experience of Lincoln’s formative years. He maintains that the bedrock of the Great Awakening and Second Great Awakening were rooted in the “strenuous Calvinism”<sup>80</sup> of Jonathan Edwards. Like Wolf, he states that the majority of Christian thought encountered by the young Lincoln was Calvinistic. He contends that:

Lincoln would conduct a lifelong dalliance with the Old School Calvinism, which attempted to acknowledge the significance of religion in a republic’s character without surrendering to the fiery agenda of New School Evangelicalism.<sup>81</sup>

He presents Lincoln’s personal beliefs as “an infidelity with a darkly Calvinistic twist which convinced Lincoln that he had no will to embrace Christianity even if he wanted to.”<sup>82</sup>

Guelzo acknowledges Lincoln’s use of the Bible and what he referred to as religious language during the Presidency. He correctly identified that this distinguished Lincoln amongst his predecessors as “The President best known for pouring public policy into the molds of religious thought, the one most often claimed after his death as ‘The Christian President.’”<sup>83</sup> Guelzo strongly disagrees with the notion that Lincoln’s use of the Bible can be viewed as a genuine expression of his faith.

Some of the most distinctive elements of Guelzo’s work are found in his penetrating conclusions drawn from already available evidence. For example, he considered the timing of Lincoln’s assassination to be extremely important to the largely Christian populace. He submits that the Good Friday assassination meant that,

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<sup>78</sup> Allen C. Guelzo, *Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 463.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

“almost irresistibly, he was compared to Jesus Christ.”<sup>84</sup> He made the interesting point that only 48 hours after Lincoln’s demise, Clerics across the nation changed their sermons to preach about Lincoln on what became ‘Black Easter.’<sup>85</sup> He suggests that “The well-nigh unanimous rush of the clergy was not to criticize Lincoln, but to baptize him posthumously.”<sup>86</sup> Guelzo uses these facts to suggest that this immediate aftermath would unbalance the future debate on Lincoln’s faith in favour of a Christian interpretation.

Guelzo acknowledged the extent of Lincoln’s use of the Bible throughout his political career.<sup>87</sup> He also places considerable importance upon Lincoln’s appreciation of Shakespeare. Guelzo addresses himself to Lincoln’s early political speeches. He claimed that there was parity between Lincoln’s employment of both the Bible and Shakespeare: “Quoting alternatively from the Bible and Shakespeare, Lincoln managed by small gestures to please and amuse both secular and evangelical Whigs.”<sup>88</sup> Although he is correct in highlighting Lincoln’s enthusiastic appreciation of Shakespeare, he fails to deal with the fact there are no quotations or allusions to the Bard’s text in Lincoln’s public address.

Guelzo rejected any notion that Lincoln was not in a traditional sense a Christian: “He remained by any technical definition, an ‘infidel’.”<sup>89</sup> Indeed this quotation from the end of Guelzo’s work is somewhat typical of the points he sought to establish: “Lincoln was a typical Victorian doubter, born in the Enlightenment, shaped by Classical Liberalism.”<sup>90</sup> Guelzo claimed that Lincoln saw religion as of limited moral value to prevent “mere hedonism.”<sup>91</sup>

Guelzo also places considerable reliance upon the testimonies of Lincoln’s contemporaries. Unlike the other scholars, he concentrates on Herndon’s assessment of Lincoln’s engagement with the Bible. Guelzo cites Herndon’s opinions to discredit the contemporary testimonies that the previous authors had relied so heavily upon in order to present Lincoln as a Christian.<sup>92</sup> He points out the considerable discrepancy

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 440.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 446.

<sup>87</sup> “His speeches and public documents were littered with Biblical allusions from the 1830’s onwards.” Ibid., 151.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 318.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 461.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 455.

<sup>92</sup> “No one was more contemptuous of these testifiers than William Henry Herndon.” Ibid., 442.

in the nature of eyewitness accounts.<sup>93</sup> Guelzo suggests that Herndon's views on Lincoln's faith had not been as widely appreciated, because the timing and methods which he chose to publicise his claims about Lincoln's beliefs proved a "disastrous tactical mistake."<sup>94</sup> Guelzo contends that public opinion wanted Lincoln to be a Christian and that this was a contributory factor which served to suppress Herndon's case.<sup>95</sup> He places considerable importance on Herndon's claims that Lincoln was an infidel.

In contrast to the previously reviewed volumes, Guelzo rejects the notion that Smith had any significant influence on Lincoln's beliefs or attitudes to the Bible.<sup>96</sup> He asserts that Smith was unable to convince Lincoln that the Bible was anything more than "pertinent quotations;"<sup>97</sup> again Herndon was the source for this stance. Guelzo sought to discover the extent of Lincoln's reading, making that point that he had access to Herndon's library of philosophical thinkers.<sup>98</sup> He discredits Lincoln's adult reading of the Bible as influential to his religious or political thinking.

Guelzo furnishes some area of detailed research and offers intriguing arguments against the notion of Lincoln as a Christian. He concludes his work by conceding the possibility that if Lincoln had lived longer, his life may have been changed: "Perhaps, in the end, he hoped to find some beginning of an answer after the presidency was laid down, in Jerusalem or some other place of pilgrimage."<sup>99</sup> Guelzo summarizes his conclusions by stating that Lincoln had moved from the infidelity of his New Salem experience to a form of deism by the time of his assassination.

#### **1.4.5. Richard Carwardine**

In 2003 Richard Carwardine published *Lincoln: A life of Purpose and Power*. The intention was to explore the motivating and influential forces that shaped Lincoln. Although other issues are examined, his treatment of Lincoln's personal faith has been so well received<sup>100</sup> that it warrants inclusion in this review. In terms of presenting a balanced interpretation of this subject, Carwardine has very few peers.

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid. 443.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 443.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 445.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 155-157.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 105-107.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 463.

<sup>100</sup> In 2004 *Lincoln: A Life of Purpose and Power* was awarded the prestigious Lincoln Prize, by the Lincoln and Soldiers Institute, Gettysburg.

Carwardine considered that Lincoln was genuine in his use of the Bible and his religious reflections. However, he came to the conclusion that Lincoln was not an Evangelical Christian in the classical sense. One example of the way in which Carwardine considers Lincoln's use of the Bible to be genuine is as follows:

Lincoln's use of the Bible in the struggle over slavery was driven by conviction, not expediency. As Herndon recognized, whether or not Lincoln believed in the divine inspiration of Scripture 'he accepted the practical precepts of that great book as binding a like upon his head and his conscience.'<sup>101</sup>

He acknowledges the importance of Lincoln's early introduction to the Bible: "Through his mother's teaching and his own study he acquired a command of the scriptures which would continue to impress observes and inform his rhetoric."<sup>102</sup> He makes the case that Lincoln possessed an impressive knowledge of the Bible. Carwardine presents the case that Lincoln experienced a period of scepticism as a young man.<sup>103</sup> He then builds an argument for the gradual intensifying of Lincoln's personal faith, evidenced in part by his public use of the Bible during the Presidency.<sup>104</sup>

In his sixth chapter, Carwardine examines what he describes as the instruments of Lincoln's presidential power. He cites Lincoln's personal faith as a significant instrument of this power.<sup>105</sup> While acknowledging Lincoln's reticence to divulge much detail about his faith, Carwardine considers that the subject required addressing in order to understand Lincoln as President.<sup>106</sup>

Carwardine examines the possibility that Lincoln's public use of the Bible might simply be the pragmatic opportunism of a shrewd political operator. While conceding that Lincoln was certainly the latter,<sup>107</sup> he argues that Lincoln's use of scripture was a genuine expression of his faith. Carwardine does not offer much

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<sup>101</sup> Richard Carwardine, *Lincoln: A Life of Purpose and Power* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2003. Reprint, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006) Kindle edition, Location 994.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, Location 799.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, Locations 803-819.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, Locations 4596-4656.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, Location 105.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, Location 120.

<sup>107</sup> Carwardine considers the importance of the fact that Lincoln's use of the Bible was a factor in his "Remarkable success in reaching out to the influential 'subcultures' of Evangelical Protestantism." He believed that despite the advantage that this bought; it was none-the-less still a genuine expression of his respect for the Bible. *Ibid.*, Location 55.

specific examination of Lincoln's use of the Bible; it is simply considered when needed to address the chosen issues of the book.

Carwardine presents the idea that Lincoln used the Bible to enhance the efficaciousness of his political message, but also that his thinking was actually informed by his reading of the Bible, during his youth."<sup>108</sup> He places particular importance upon the theological context of Lincoln's formative experience of the Bible.

Lincoln held on too much of what he had learned in his early experience of religion. Not least, Lincoln's commonly noted fatalism, which he never shed, reflects the continuing legacy of his high Calvinistic upbringing.<sup>109</sup>

An illustration of the importance of this point to Carwardine is found in the fact that the word 'Bible' appears 25 times in the book, 'Scripture' 18 times, while Calvinism<sup>110</sup> is mentioned on 34 occasions. Carwardine considered Lincoln's faith was genuine but uniquely his:

Lincoln's moral understanding of the demands of power was not founded on a conventional Christian faith. But the evolution of his religious thought, his quest to understand divine purposes during the war, his Calvinistic frame of reference, and the ease with which he rooted his arguments in Scripture, make it essential to take his religion seriously.<sup>111</sup>

The previous authors refer to the Calvinism of Lincoln's youth and the gradual development of his faith into the Presidential years. It is Carwardine who devotes considerable coverage to these issues, which is possibly the most important contribution of this work to the subject of Lincoln's faith.

#### **1.4.6. Biographies**

There are many valuable and influential contributions to the subject of Lincoln's use of the Bible, which are contained within works that feature such treatment as one of the many objectives in understanding the Sixteenth President. Indeed, there are well-received scholarly works on Lincoln's life and career that suggest that the Bible was an irrelevance to him. There is a considerable percentage of biographies that

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., Location 71.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., Location 783.

<sup>110</sup> The 34 times in which Calvinism is mentioned actually refers to the occasion in which Carwardine employs a derivative of the term. The words Calvinist, Calvinism and Calvinistic comprise this calculation.

<sup>111</sup> Carwardine, *Purpose and Power*, Location 6455.

acknowledge Lincoln's engagement with the Bible, and simply choose not to offer any comment beyond acknowledgement. The degree to which the subject is addressed varies dramatically, depending upon the author's intentions.

Biographies that considered that Lincoln's use of the Bible derived from a genuine Christian faith are offered by Arnold,<sup>112</sup> Holland,<sup>113</sup> and more recently White.<sup>114</sup> Books written by Charnwood,<sup>115</sup> Thomas<sup>116</sup> and Oates<sup>117</sup> are prominent examples of those that offer little more than references to Lincoln using the Bible. One of the most significant recent biographies is Burlingame's, which was the first multi-volume publication for over 50 years. Burlingame provides detailed and on occasion insightful reflection on the nature of Lincoln's use of the Bible in his major speeches. The purpose of the biography was to furnish an exhaustive account of Lincoln's life and career, and for the most part the depth of research has been unparalleled in the last 60 years. Burlingame did not apply this same rigor to his treatment of Lincoln's use of the Bible, touching briefly on this subject when occasion demanded.

The most deliberate attempt to dismiss the significance of Lincoln's public use of the Bible came from the biographies of Herndon<sup>118</sup> and Lamon.<sup>119</sup> Herndon heavily influenced Lamon, who purchased Herndon's research notes to compose his own publication. Both men present dismissal, rather than reasoned rebuttal, of the claims that Lincoln's use of the Bible derived from a genuine personal faith.

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<sup>112</sup> Isaac N. Arnold, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg and Co., 1885).

<sup>113</sup> Josiah G. Holland, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (Springfield: Gurdon Bill, 1866).

<sup>114</sup> Ronald C. White, *A. Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 2009) Kindle edition. White also addresses Lincoln's faith and use of the Bible in his examination of Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address and Speeches in general. Ronald C. White, *Lincoln's Greatest Speech: The Second Inaugural Address* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002); and *The Eloquent President; A Portrait of Lincoln Through his Words* (New York: Random House, 2005).

<sup>115</sup> Lord Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: H. Holt and Co., 1916. Reprint, New York: Madison Books, 1996).

<sup>116</sup> Benjamin P. Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1952).

<sup>117</sup> Stephen B. Oates, *With Malice Toward None: A Life of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1994).

<sup>118</sup> William H. Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln: The True Story of a Great Life*, 2 Vols. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1895).

<sup>119</sup> Ward Hill Lamon, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln: His Birth to His Inauguration as President* (Boston: J.R. Osgood and Co., 1872).



#### 1.4.7. Books dedicated to Lincoln's faith

The majority of books on Lincoln's faith have tended to present the case for Lincoln being a Christian. Examples of such are those by Remsburg,<sup>120</sup> Pennell,<sup>121</sup> Jackson,<sup>122</sup> Peters,<sup>123</sup> Thayer,<sup>124</sup> Wettstein,<sup>125</sup> Johnstone,<sup>126</sup> Hill,<sup>127</sup> Fox,<sup>128</sup> Macartney,<sup>129</sup> Owen,<sup>130</sup> and Anderson.<sup>131</sup> These represent a variety of approaches to several aspects of the study of Lincoln's faith. The majority of these works tend to assume that Lincoln's use of the Bible was unassailable evidence of his Christianity, and proceed with an evaluation and presentation of his faith. The works that concentrate on Lincoln's faith offer little by way of examination of his use of the Bible, choosing only a selection of texts that support the ideas on faith being presented.

In 2000 Morel published his work on the effects of Lincoln's religious beliefs in the Civil War government.<sup>132</sup> He later collaborated<sup>133</sup> with Calhoun in an article that presented a compelling argument for the validity of Lincoln's Christian beliefs. The most recent book on this subject was offered by Mansfield in 2012.<sup>134</sup> Mansfield follows a similar pattern to previous works, concentrating on a mixture of witness testimony and selective Biblical quotations to establish what he considers to be the validity of Lincoln's Christian faith. Mansfield is measured in his approach, offering conclusions similar in substance to Carwardine's, although his are presented in a more devotional sense.

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<sup>120</sup> John B. Remsburg, *Abraham Lincoln: Was He a Christian?* (New York: The Truth Seeker Company, 1893).

<sup>121</sup> Orrin H. Pennell, *Religious Views of Abraham Lincoln* (Alliance: R.M. Scranton Printing Co., 1899).

<sup>122</sup> Samuel T. Jackson, *Lincoln's Use of the Bible* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1909).

<sup>123</sup> Madison C. Peters, *Abraham Lincoln's Religion* (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1909).

<sup>124</sup> George A. Thayer, *The Religion of Abraham Lincoln* (Cincinnati: The Ebbert and Richardson Co., 1909).

<sup>125</sup> Carl T. Wettstein, *Was Abraham Lincoln an Infidel?* (Boston: The C.M. Clark Publishing Company, 1910).

<sup>126</sup> William J. Johnstone, *Abraham Lincoln the Christian* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1913).

<sup>127</sup> John W. Hill, *Abraham Lincoln: Man of God* (New York and London: G.P. Putman's and Sons, 1920).

<sup>128</sup> G. George Fox, *Lincoln's Faith Based Leadership* (Bloomington: Author House, 2005), originally published in limited edition as G. George Fox, *Abraham Lincoln's Religion* (New York: Exposition Books, 1959).

<sup>129</sup> Clarence E.N. Macartney, *Lincoln and the Bible* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949).

<sup>130</sup> Fredrick G. Owen, *A Heart that Yearned for God: Abraham Lincoln, his Life and Faith* (Washington D.C.: Third Century Publishers, 1976).

<sup>131</sup> Ron L. Anderson, *Abraham Lincoln: God's Humble Instrument* (Salt Lake City: Millennial Mind Publishing, 2009) Kindle edition.

<sup>132</sup> Lucas E. Morel, *Lincoln's Sacred Effort: Defining Religion's Role in Self-Government* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2000).

<sup>133</sup> Samuel W. Calhoun and Lucas E Morel, "Abraham Lincoln's Religion: The case for his Ultimate Belief in a Personal, Sovereign God," *Journal of The Abraham Lincoln Association* 33, no. 1 (2012).

<sup>134</sup> Stephen Mansfield, *Lincoln's Battle with God* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012).

In his work *The Inspired Wisdom of Abraham Lincoln*,<sup>135</sup> Ostergard presents many of the occasions in which the Bible's influence can be seen. This book is a useful work and presents a considerable number of occasion in which Lincoln appears to use the Bible. Ostergard offers very brief comments on the texts reproduced from the Collected Works, all of which he assumes to be evidence of a genuine Christian faith. Many of these comments contain an almost devotional quality, leading the reader to the conclusion that this was never intended to be a thorough examination of Lincoln's engagement with the Bible.

There are a number of titles that deal with subject matter that naturally encroach into the issue at hand. This is particularly true in the case of books on Lincoln's speeches. Both Wills<sup>136</sup> and Elmore<sup>137</sup> present a detailed and insightful treatment of the Gettysburg Address. Briggs<sup>138</sup> presents some original thinking on Lincoln's major speeches, and in doing so delivers some treatment on Lincoln's use of the Bible, which again concentrates largely upon what is revealed about his beliefs.

#### **1.4.8. In conclusion**

This review sought to introduce the most important works that deal with Lincoln's use of the Bible. The references to other books that also consider this subject have been offered to demonstrate something of the coverage of this subject. The fact is that all authors who examine Lincoln's life and public addresses touch upon his use of the Bible. What the considerable variety of works have in common is that they all seek, in various ways, to establish what Lincoln's use of the Bible revealed about his personal faith. There have been no exhaustive attempts to catalogue all the occasions when Lincoln appeared to use or refer to the Bible in his writing and address. The analysis of Lincoln's use of the Bible is never very detailed and almost never seeks to set Lincoln's quotations and allusions into their original Biblical context. The overriding intention to examine Lincoln's beliefs has inadvertently led to the place of the Bible being neglected as a significant area of investigation. The intention to evaluate

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<sup>135</sup> Philip L. Ostergard, *The Inspired Wisdom of Abraham Lincoln* (Carol Stream: Tyndale, 2008).

<sup>136</sup> Gary Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1992).

<sup>137</sup> A.E. Elmore, *Lincoln's Gettysburg Address: Echoes of the Bible and Book of Common Prayer* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009).

<sup>138</sup> John C. Briggs, *Lincoln's Speeches: Reconsidered* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005).

Lincoln's beliefs has not considered the question of essentiality regarding the Bible in Lincoln's political career.

This thesis attempts to stand in a gap that exists in the study of Lincoln's political career. It will offer an exhaustive presentation of all the occasions when Lincoln either quoted from or alluded to the Bible. Those presented will be by no means equal in importance or clarity. This thesis will seek to demonstrate that Lincoln's engagement with the Bible not only indicates aspects of his personal faith, but also had a tangible effect on his political thinking and his prosecution of the War. The question of the place of the Bible will be considered and the case will be made that the Bible is not only present in Lincoln's writing and speeches, but on certain significant occasions it proved to be an essential factor, without which the Sixteenth Presidency would have been less potent.

## **1.5. Methodology**

This thesis will seek to discover the place of the Bible in Lincoln's political career, and to establish whether this was an essential part of Lincoln's success. In order to provide thorough conclusions, and to avoid major digression into related areas that do not add to research conclusions, the following methodology will be employed.

### **1.5.1. Parameters of the research**

The essential issue of how Lincoln used the Bible can be separated into the following important elements: firstly, an examination of the occasions in which Lincoln used the Bible; secondly, an examination of the way in which Lincoln engaged with the Bible. Scholars have noted that Lincoln's style of composition was at times reflective of the language, rhythm, and cadence of the King James Bible.<sup>139</sup> This is an important point, but the intention of this thesis is not to engage in a deeply linguistic discussion. The

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<sup>139</sup> In quotation of Lincoln's opening words at Gettysburg, Fletcher comments thus, "The Biblical cadence of these words resonates in memory." George P. Fletcher, *Our Secret Constitution: How Lincoln Redefined American Democracy*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 39. In his study of the religious symbolism of Washington, Meyer focused on Lincoln words inscribed on the Lincoln Memorial, and recognised the rhythm of The King James Bible in Lincoln's text. Jeffery F. Meyer, *Myths in Stone: Religious Dimensions of Washington D.C.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) 202. A sample of works, which also recognise the linguistic influence of the King James Bible's language and cadence on Lincoln, is here presented. Robert P. Watson, William D. Pederson, and Frank J. Williams, eds. *Lincoln's Enduring Legacy: Perspectives from Great Thinkers, Great Leaders, and the American Experiment* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011); Elmore, *Gettysburg Address*; Lucas E. Morel, *Lincoln's Sacred Effort: Defining Religion's Role in Self-Government* (Kentucky: Lexington Books, 2000); Harold Holzer, and Sara V. Gabbard, eds. *Lincoln and Freedom: Slavery, Emancipation and the Thirteenth Amendment* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007).

intention of this research is to discover and explain the place that the text and message of the Bible played in Lincoln's political career. Thirdly, issues will be examined relating to any significance in the frequency, or infrequency, of Lincoln's use of the Bible. The research results will be examined as they arise, in order to discern any pattern in the way in which Lincoln used the Bible. The following issues will be revisited at appropriate moments during the thesis.

One particular question will be addressed which relates to whether Lincoln was simply following the customs of the day in his use of the Bible. Lincoln was President of a largely Christian population, and the expectations of the electorate are a factor in this investigation. One aspect of Lincoln's practice was that he was fastidious in his preparation, and most of what he wrote and delivered was carefully calculated to have an effect. In establishing that Lincoln's use of the Bible was a significant feature of his political career and legacy, an important question will emerge. If Lincoln had not used the Bible, would his career and legacy have been as illustrious? It can of course be unwise to engage in hypothetical speculation. However, this question is valid in that it presents the possibility that Lincoln used the Bible so effectively that it actually helped shape his legacy. For the purpose of the thesis, a largely narrative or chronological approach will be adopted. The exception will be the examination of Lincoln's treatment of the will of God.

### **1.5.2. The Collected Works**

The literary parameter for this research will be as extensive as the project will permit; there is, however, one primary source that will form the basis of the investigation, namely *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*. In 1953, an editorial team led by Roy Basler compiled every known composition of Lincoln's into an eight-volume work.

The first entry is taken from Lincoln's arithmetic book and reads, "Abraham Lincoln, his pen in hand, he will be good but, god knows when."<sup>140</sup> The final entry is a note admitting guests to the Executive mansion; this note was written a matter of hours before his assassination.<sup>141</sup> Basler's compilation is universally considered to be

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<sup>140</sup> This entry is dated between 1824-1826. Roy P. Basler, ed. *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 1. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953-1955), 1.

<sup>141</sup> The 'Card of Admission for George Ashmun' was signed by Lincoln on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 1865. Ibid., Vol. 8, 413.

the authoritative record of Lincoln's writings and speeches, both personal and political.<sup>142</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, these volumes will simply be referred to as CW.

In order to comment effectively upon Lincoln's use of the Bible, it will be necessary to examine everything that Lincoln wrote. The CW will therefore be examined in the most thorough fashion. Every word in each volume will be read, to identify Lincoln's use of the Bible in the wider context of Lincoln's body of work. In addition to the eight volumes of the CW there are two volumes of additions, which were published in 1974 and 1990 respectively.<sup>143</sup> Both volumes are reasonably rare and were read in their entirety at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.<sup>144</sup>

### **1.5.3. Lincoln's Bibles**

Lincoln's knowledge of the Bible came from his own extensive and expansive reading of the Scriptures. In later years Lincoln owned, and therefore possibly used, a copy of Cruden's *Concordance to the Bible*.<sup>145</sup> However, the majority of his excellent knowledge came as a result of his reading the Bible. This thesis will not offer detailed examination of the actual physical volumes that Lincoln owned and used. It is however necessary, in the interests of thorough research, to furnish some brief explanation regarding the Bibles with which Lincoln was personally connected.

#### **1.5.3.1. Lincoln's first Bible**

The volume is known as both the 'Mother's Bible'<sup>146</sup> then latterly as the 'Thomas Lincoln Bible.'<sup>147</sup> The Bible was a 1799 edition<sup>148</sup> of what became known as the

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<sup>142</sup> All the biographies and the vast majority of all Lincoln books listed in the Bibliography of this thesis recognize the authority of Basler's compilation.

<sup>143</sup> Both volumes are not available on line, at the time of writing this thesis. Roy P. Basler, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln: Supplement, 1832-1865* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1974) and Roy P. Basler, and Christian O. Basler, eds. *The Collected Works Of Abraham Lincoln: Second Supplement, 1848-1865* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990). Note: There are no biblical references in this volume.

<sup>144</sup> For the purpose of this thesis the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library will be referred to as the ALPL.

<sup>145</sup> The Lincoln Collection at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library contains an edition of Cruden's *Concordance to the Bible*, which the library considers to be the exact edition, which Lincoln owned. The volume bears a pencil inscription 'Mrs. Chander of Illinois, 1861.' Alexander Cruden, *Complete Concordance to the Scriptures* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1858).

<sup>146</sup> This Bible became known as the 'Mother's Bible' because it was she who read it to the boy Lincoln, however it was actually Lincoln's father Thomas who purchased the Bible, for \$5.00, in 1806 in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. Louis A. Warren, *Lincoln's Youth, Indiana Years 1816-1830* (Indianapolis:

*Ostervald*<sup>149</sup> Bible. The *Thomas Lincoln Bible* was sold in 1893 for exhibition at the Chicago World Fair.<sup>150</sup> The Bible would eventually be exhibited at Lincoln's Birthplace Visitors' Centre, Hodgenville, Kentucky.<sup>151</sup> For the purpose of this thesis this volume will be referred to as the *Ostervald Bible*.

### 1.5.3.2. The Lucy Speed Bible

The volume known as the 'Lucy Speed Bible' was a gift to Lincoln from Mary and Joshua Speed's mother, Lucy, and was received on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1841.<sup>152</sup> During his first year in office President Lincoln sent Lucy an autographed photograph,<sup>153</sup> bearing the following: "For Mrs. Lucy G. Speed, from whose pious hand I accepted the present of an Oxford Bible Twenty years ago."<sup>154</sup> Lincoln's gesture, so many years after the event, suggests that the volume was appreciated and even used throughout those two proceeding decades.

### 1.5.3.3. The Pocket New Testament

Eyewitness accounts reported Lincoln reading what has become known as the 'Pocket New Testament.' One report recalled seeing Lincoln reading this Bible on a return trip from Fortress Munroe, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1862.<sup>155</sup>

### 1.5.3.4. The Book of Psalms

Lincoln owned a volume known simply as 'The Book of Psalms,' which was of black leather binding, with the words "Book of Psalms" and "Abraham Lincoln" in gold lettering on its front.

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Indiana Historical Society, 1959), 31; Robert S. Barton, *How Many Lincoln Bibles* (Foxboro: Published by the Author, 1951), 3. Lincoln Collection, ALPL.

<sup>147</sup> In post World War II publications the volume is generally referred to as the 'Thomas Lincoln Bible,' for the simple reason that he purchased the Bible for his family. Barton, *How Many*, 2.

<sup>148</sup> Warren, *Lincoln's Youth*, 31.

<sup>149</sup> *The Ostervald Bible* is so named because it contains "Arguments and Theological Observations" from the Reverend Jean Frederick Ostervald (1663-1747). Barton, *How Many*.

<sup>150</sup> Barton, *How Many*, 3.

<sup>151</sup> <http://www.nps.gov/abli/planyourvisit/index.htm>, accessed 29th December 2011.

<sup>152</sup> Louis A. Warren, "Historic Lincoln Bibles." *Lincoln Lore*, no. 567 (1940). Lincoln Collection, ALPL.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Sent from the Executive Mansion, Washington D.C., 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1861. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, 546.

<sup>155</sup> Warren, "Historic Lincoln Bibles."

#### **1.5.4. The Bible in this thesis**

In pursuit of understanding Lincoln's use of the Bible, it will be helpful to use the Bible that Lincoln actually read, namely the King James translation. No attempt will be made to employ the original languages of the Bible, because Lincoln did not know Hebrew, or Koine Greek. There will be occasions in which it will be important to ascertain what the perception of Lincoln's audience would have been concerning the biblical texts he employed. There are therefore occasional references to commentaries and textbooks that were in circulation in the United States during the Antebellum.

##### **1.5.4.1 The *Ostervald Bible***

This Bible is of particular interest in understanding Lincoln's use of the Bible. It is the Bible that Lincoln read as a youth. Lincoln's original *Ostervald Bible* is not available for examination. However, the Lincoln Collection, at the ALPL owns a 1793 edition of the *Ostervald Bible*, which contains exactly the same text and notation as Lincoln's 1799 copy. During this research the 1793 edition was thoroughly scrutinized, and all the Biblical texts quoted herein are extracted directly from the *Ostervald Bible*.

The Bible contains Ostervald's study notes on the text. It is universally accepted that the young Lincoln devoured all he could read.<sup>156</sup> It is, therefore, reasonable to consider that he would have read Ostervald's accompanying notes. In order to offer some possible understanding of what Lincoln may have thought regarding the meaning of the texts he employed, the Ostervald notes have been examined, where they relate to Lincoln's major Biblical quotations. The text and notes of this Bible represent the primary resource that shaped Lincoln's thorough knowledge and understanding of the Bible. The *Ostervald Bible* is therefore useful in seeking to understand the place of the Bible in Lincoln's political career.

#### **1.5.5. Speculative hypothesis in the assessment of Lincoln**

The progress of this thesis will demonstrate that Lincoln did not keep a diary and was reticent to discuss personal matters. This feature of Lincoln's conduct has shaped generations of historians' seeking to write concerning matters of his inner thoughts, intentions, and especially beliefs. Smith correctly observes, "Part of the problem is that these forays into the 'inner' Lincoln rest on such relatively sparse and contested

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

sources.”<sup>157</sup> Burlingame commences his important biography on Lincoln with the following confession, “Many educated guesses, informed by over twenty years of research on Lincoln, appear in this biography.”<sup>158</sup> The simple presentation of facts does not draw sufficient conclusion, and in Lincoln’s case the evidence of his political speeches and writings invite the author to evaluate his remarks.

This thesis will offer examination based on the available facts, reliable contemporary witness testimony, the opinion of scholars, and a degree of speculative hypothesis will also be offered. The objective is to be as reasonable as possible and to present theories and ideas based primarily on what Lincoln himself said or wrote. The main area of careful speculation will occur in the examination of Lincoln’s intentions and inspirations, regarding his engagement with the Bible. There are some feasible suggestions that look beyond Lincoln’s references to the Bible, and suggest that the context of these verses may also have informed his thinking. There is also the possibility that Lincoln could have engaged a biblical allusion, which he received from a source other than the Bible. It is impossible to offer definitive reasoning for Lincoln’s use of the Bible, but this thesis will seek to present reasonable theories for Lincoln’s activity in this area.

## **1.6. Lincoln and Biblical Reception Theory**

Barton describes Reception History as “One of the fastest growing areas in Biblical Studies.”<sup>159</sup> Despite this, Roberts points out that “As a practice, reception history is undatable, as there is nothing new in collating the responses of different readers to a particular text.”<sup>160</sup> Indeed, he notes that the study of any reader’s use of the Bible can constitute Reception History and continues with the suggestion that “The reception of the Bible comprises every single word of interpretation of that book (or books) over the course of three millennia.”<sup>161</sup> He further suggests that whether it is Jesus’ reading

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<sup>157</sup> Adam I. P. Smith, “The Challenge of Biography: What do they know of Lincoln who only know Lincoln,” *The Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 31, no. 2 (2010): 70.

<sup>158</sup> Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life, Vol. 1*. (Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), xi.

<sup>159</sup> John Barton, “Reflections on Literary Criticism,” in *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible*, eds. Joel M. LeMon, and Kent Harold Richards, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 534.

<sup>160</sup> Jonathon Roberts in Michael Lieb, Emma Mason and Jonathon Roberts, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of The Reception History of the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 5.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.



of Isaiah, Augustine's of Romans or a Sunday school nativity play, when it comes to the study of Biblical Reception "nothing is excluded."<sup>162</sup>

Roberts' caveats notwithstanding, Tate offers a working definition of contemporary Biblical Reception Theory as "A literary theory that examines the manner in which readers interpret a literary work in the light of the changes and effects of history."<sup>163</sup> Parris submits a similar proposition,

It is only through reception, through the interrelationship between the literary work and the reading public, that a work of literature reveals its structure and meaning in an open series of historical events.<sup>164</sup>

Given these claims, it seems justifiable to conclude that the work of modern reception scholars provides a useful implement with which to assess Lincoln's engagement with the Bible. Indeed, Reception Theory is of particular interest in evaluating Lincoln since his use of the Bible in his writing and speeches was so completely rooted in the historical context of the Antebellum and the War. This thesis will suggest that Lincoln used the Bible to present his political message and in particular his understanding of the meaning of the War. This approach of engaging with the Bible to comment upon the specific conditions of a given historical context is not inconsistent with Talbert's assertion that the reader becomes a significant part of the meaning of the text. He states "Arrival at meaning does not simply entail reproducing the author's intent, nor is this reproduction entirely possible."<sup>165</sup>

Lincoln's reception of the Bible will be considered in the light of some of the appropriate tools of evaluation that will be introduced in this section. Most hermeneutical works that deal with Biblical Reception Theory seek to examine the reception of the Old Testament by New Testament authors. The categories which contemporary Reception Theory scholars use to analyse the New Testament writers' use of the Old Testament provide critical tools that may also be applied to Lincoln in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of his methods of biblical reception. The context for the remarks of all scholars in this section is therefore the New Testament's reception of the Old, unless otherwise stated.

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Randolph W. Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach, Third Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008) Kindle edition, Location 15230.

<sup>164</sup> David Parris, "Reception Theory: Philosophical Hermeneutics, Literary Theory, and Biblical Interpretation." (PhD diss., University of Nottingham, 1999), 139.

<sup>165</sup> Andrew Rhett Talbert, "The Reception History of 2 Thessalonians With Special Reference to John Chrysostom, Haimo of Auxerre, and John Calvin." (PhD diss., University of Nottingham, 2012), 38.

### 1.6.1. Direct Quotations

This first category of Biblical Reception that can be identified in Lincoln's work is, in a sense, self-explanatory. Scholars refer interchangeably to "direct quotations,"<sup>166</sup> "direct citations"<sup>167</sup> and "explicit quotations."<sup>168</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, the designations 'direct quotation' or simply 'quotation' will be used. Gregory contends that a direct quotation constitutes "...the strongest possible evidence" of use by an author.<sup>169</sup>

Beale addresses the issue of identification of quotations, suggesting the following useful possibilities. In a quotation the language is exactly the same as the original. In addition to this, some quotations will be introduced by a prefix, for example in the New Testament "it is written."<sup>170</sup> Steyn states that quotations should be clearly defined by introductory formulae, especially references.<sup>171</sup> Leonard believes that the length of quotation, especially if accompanied by citation, would provide the clearest connection to a source.<sup>172</sup> Gregory aligns himself with the thinking of Ludwig Kolher who considers that "...precise wording or phraseology," without specific citation, is sufficient to warrant acceptance as a genuine quotation.<sup>173</sup> Nicole submits that the New Testament authors employed quotation of the Old in almost every conceivable circumstance.<sup>174</sup> This is noteworthy because Lincoln also appeared to engage with the Bible in many different circumstances in order to relate to widely varying situations.

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<sup>166</sup> Andrew Gregory, *The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period Before Irenaeus* (Tubingen: Mohr Seibek, 2003), 6.

<sup>167</sup> Roger Nicole, "New Testament Use of the Old Testament," in *Revelation and the Bible*, ed. Carl F. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1958), 137.

<sup>168</sup> Gert J. Steyn, *An Overview of the Extent and Diversity of Methods Utilised by the Author of Hebrews When Using the Old Testament* (Pretoria: New Testament Society of South Africa, 2008), 2.

<sup>169</sup> Gregory, *Reception of Luke and Acts*, 6.

<sup>170</sup> G.K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012) Kindle edition, Location 741.

<sup>171</sup> Steyn, *Extent and Diversity*, 2.

<sup>172</sup> Jeffery M. Leonard, "Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions: Psalm 78 as a Test Case." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127, no. 2 (2008): 242.

<sup>173</sup> Gregory, *Reception of Luke and Acts*, 6.

<sup>174</sup> Nicole states that the authors used quotations in their sermons, histories, letters, prayer, when addressing Jews and Gentiles, churches or individuals, for illustration, instruction, documentation, prophecy, reproof, and in many different physical and geographical contexts. Nicole, "New Testament Use", 137.

### 1.6.2. Paraphrase

Corley defines a paraphrase as a “Restatement of a text, passage, or literary composition, giving the meaning in words other than those of the original writer or speaker.”<sup>175</sup> Nicole observed the following practice of New Testament authors’ reception of the Old; he refers to it as ‘Slight modification.’ These modifications are paraphrases that change pronouns, transform the person, tense, mood or voice of verbs with the objective to “...better suit the connection in the New Testament.”<sup>176</sup> The degree to which the proposed paraphrase bears similarity to the original is in itself considered to be compelling. For example, Nicole cites 45 instances in the New Testament in which “The similarity with certain Old Testament passages is so profound that, although no explicit indication is given the New Testament author was referring to Old Testament Scripture, his intention to do so can scarcely be doubted.”<sup>177</sup> Nicole also identifies paraphrasing that is in essence more general. He considers the New Testament authors’ summary of general teachings from Old Testament books to be “obviously legitimate,” and refers to this practice of paraphrasing as “quotations of substance.”<sup>178</sup>

A particular observation of Nicole’s is of relevance to Lincoln’s use of the Bible, specifically that the New Testament authors were generally writing for an audience that possessed varying degrees of prior knowledge of the Old Testament. This would appear to be a requirement for successful paraphrasing, namely the audience must possess some familiarity with the original texts.<sup>179</sup> Indeed in Jauss’ earlier thinking he considered that the most important criteria in establishing the influence of a text were the degree to which it negated the way the audience had already received an understanding thereof.<sup>180</sup> If it is demonstrated that Lincoln employed paraphrasing of the Bible in his compositions, then the effectiveness of this was partially dependent upon the Biblical awareness of his audience.

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<sup>175</sup> Bruce Corley, Steve Lemke and Grant Lovejoy, eds. *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture, Second Edition* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2002), 461.

<sup>176</sup> Nicole, “New Testament Use,” 146.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>179</sup> John F.A. Sawyer, *A Concise Dictionary of the Bible and Its Reception* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 217; Parris, “Reception Theory,” 140; Nicole, “New Testament Use,” 150.

<sup>180</sup> Hans Robert Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982, 14-15.

Leonard places considerable importance upon the value of paraphrases as evidence of textual influence. He contends that “Shared phrases suggest a stronger connection than do individual shared terms,”<sup>181</sup> and that this is evidence of significant dependence on a given text. He also points out that “Shared language that is rare or distinctive suggests a stronger connection than does language that is widely used.”<sup>182</sup> In support of Nicole’s notion that a substantial paraphrase is a significant indication of reliance upon a source, he quotes Campbell, who considers that “A careful paraphrase that does complete justice to the source is preferable to a long quotation.”<sup>183</sup> Similarity of Lincoln’s language with that of the Bible will therefore be assessed in order to establish whether these suggested criteria for a genuine paraphrase can be identified.

### **1.6.3. Critical evaluation of Quotations and Paraphrases**

There are similarities in the issues that arise during the evaluation of Lincoln’s use of Biblical quotations and paraphrases. This section will introduce both shared and specific considerations in the assessment of Lincoln’s employment of both methods of Biblical Reception.

The fact that the identification of quotations is the least ambiguous in the area of evaluation of Lincoln’s reception of the Bible does not mean that the task is entirely without difficulties. There are incidents in which Lincoln offers direct Biblical quotations, even occasionally furnishing textual citation. However, the presence of such quotation does not guarantee overwhelming evidence of Lincoln’s dependence upon the Bible. The identification and assessment of Lincoln’s employment of paraphrases is slightly more challenging than is the case with quotations. The degree to which paraphrases are visible varies from those that are almost quotations, with only the occasional changing of a single word, to other examples that could almost be categorised as stronger allusions. Having sought to identify Lincoln’s quotations and paraphrases from the Bible, it will be necessary to examine some of the following possibilities for their inclusion.

If it can be reasonably demonstrated that Lincoln included Biblical quotations and paraphrases in his work, this fact alone does not in itself prove that the Bible

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<sup>181</sup> Leonard, “Inner-Biblical Allusions,” 252.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>183</sup> Nicole, “New Testament Use,” 15.

indispensably influenced him. It is possible that a Biblical quotation or paraphrase was simply part of the *Zeitgeist* of the Antebellum, a popular phrase with which other politicians expressed a position. It is feasible that Lincoln offers a quotation or paraphrase that he had read or heard from another influential orator, and simply allowed this to inspire his own composition. There is also the question of theological influence. The presence of quotation or paraphrase may indicate that Lincoln was familiar with Christian thought in a general sense; it could for example be that he heard principles supported by a pithy phrase during a Sunday sermon. Having entered Lincoln's thinking, it may then have evidenced itself in his political compositions. The question will also arise as to Lincoln's personal integrity in his use of quotations and paraphrases from the Bible. Perhaps a shrewd political operator such as Lincoln saw the opportunity to endear himself to the influential and deeply Christian electorate, by way of Biblical quotation. These considerations will be examined during the progress of this thesis, as the occasions naturally present themselves.

#### **1.6.4. Allusion**

Tate defines an allusion as “a literary device that makes reference to or attempts to conjure up in the memory of the reader a historical or literary event, object or character.”<sup>184</sup> In the attempt to define and identify an allusion to a text, it is unlikely that a better summary can be offered than Beale's: “An allusion may simply be defined as a brief expression consciously intended by an author to be dependent” upon a given text.<sup>185</sup> Tate points out that a genuine allusion is by nature ‘indirect,’<sup>186</sup> as does Lovejoy.<sup>187</sup> Tate submits the use of an allusion is successful only to the extent that both author and reader share a common body of knowledge: “In other words, recognition of allusions is often an essential factor in understanding the work.”<sup>188</sup> Lincoln's possible use of allusions depended on the fact that he addressed a populace with a good knowledge of the Bible, as is the case with a paraphrase.

Beale correctly acknowledges that the debate about what constitutes a genuine viable allusion is considerably more complex than is the case with quotations and

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<sup>184</sup> W. Randolph Tate, *Handbook for Biblical Interpretation: An Essential Guide to Methods, Terms and Concepts, Second Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012) Kindle edition, Location 1732.

<sup>185</sup> Beale, *Handbook*, Location 770.

<sup>186</sup> Tate, *Handbook for Biblical*, Location 1732.

<sup>187</sup> Corley, Lemke and Lovejoy, eds. *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 435.

<sup>188</sup> Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, Location 1732.

paraphrases.<sup>189</sup> Although the identification of allusions is not always easy, it is important. Gadamer spoke of the importance of ‘occasionality’, which he defined as “their meaning and contents are determined by the occasion for which they are intended so that they contain more than they would without this occasion.”<sup>190</sup> He uses the genre of portrait painting to illustrate his views. He points out that a portrait is more readily appreciated when the observer is familiar with the subject; however, the portrait does not cease to be so because the model that sat for the painting is not recognised. He states that “A portrait really is a portrait, and does not become one just through and for those who recognize the person portrayed.”<sup>191</sup> The purpose is to recognise the ‘occasionality’ of allusions in order to appreciate the wider meaning of a text, which the author intended the allusion to enhance. Gadamer offered the assessment, namely that such an allusion is “not incidental and remote from what the thing essentially is; they are presentations of the essence itself.”<sup>192</sup>

There are varying degrees of biblical allusion to consider.<sup>193</sup> The possibility of allusions is open to debate; indeed, the debate concerning the amount of Old Testament allusion in the New encompasses considerably diverse calculation.<sup>194</sup> The question of identification and subsequent evaluation of allusions is recognised to be a complicated issue.<sup>195</sup> Beale suggests that the majority of scholars acknowledge the importance of allusions as a genuine method of reception. He submits the suggestion that allusions generally fall into the three categories of ‘virtually certain,’ ‘probable’ and ‘possible.’<sup>196</sup> Gregory suggests that explicit reference to a text as the source of information, even if the material were not quoted verbatim, should be assumed to be evidence thereof.<sup>197</sup>

The ambiguity that is naturally associated with allusions can create complex discussions regarding the task of identification and validation. Gregory examines some of the didactic material on Jesus by the Apostolic Fathers in order to establish the influence of Matthew’s Gospel upon their thinking. He observes that the majority

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<sup>189</sup> Beale, *Handbook*, Location 749.

<sup>190</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 144.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>193</sup> Beale illustrates the discrepancy between the calculations of scholars whose suggestions of New Testament allusion to the Old amount to between 600 and 4,100. Beale, *Handbook*, Location 763.

<sup>194</sup> Nicole illustrates the difference in calculation of Old Testament allusions by citing Troy and Huehn who submit the figures as 613 and 1640, respectively. Nicole, “New Testament Use,” 137.

<sup>195</sup> Gregory, *Reception of Luke and Acts*, 6; Leonard, “Inner-Biblical Allusions,” 242.

<sup>196</sup> Beale, *Handbook*, Location 752.

<sup>197</sup> Gregory, *Reception of Luke and Acts*, 6.

of scholars have submitted complex solutions to this matter, the noticeable exception being proposed by Edouard Massaux. Gregory summarised Massaux's position thus: "Material that looks like Matthew is likely to depend on Matthew."<sup>198</sup> Gregory does not suggest a universal acceptance of Massaux's approach, but points out the danger of overcomplicating to the end that the identification of allusions is almost impossible to achieve. Beale's concluding assessment places the final evaluation with the knowledgeable reader: "The tell-tale key to discerning an allusion is that of recognising an incomparable or unique parallel in wording, syntax, concept, or cluster of motifs in the same order or structure."<sup>199</sup> He considers that an allusion exists in greater probability when both unique wording and themes are present.<sup>200</sup> Beale submits what he describes as "a good rule of thumb" for establishing an allusion. He states that an allusion should consist of the reproduction of a unique combination of at least three words.<sup>201</sup> This suggestion is not intended to be a rigid definition, as Beale also considers that on certain occasions fewer words or "even an idea may be an allusion."<sup>202</sup>

Leonard states that the most concrete proof of influence is "shared language" in the form of an extended quotation. However, he considers that allusions also contain evidence of shared language, and he submits the following thought on the matter: "Shared language need not be accompanied by shared ideology to establish a connection."<sup>203</sup> Leonard presents eight principles for assessing allusions. Some of these will be useful in the assessment of Lincoln's reception of the Bible.

Leonard submits that the accumulation of shared language suggests a stronger connection with a source.<sup>204</sup> He cites Benjamin Sommer, who submits that although some isolated allusions will be dismissed, there are occasions when some evidence of patterns consistent with a source suggests "the notion that all these cases result from happenstance becomes untenable."<sup>205</sup> Leonard also suggests that shared language does not always need to be coupled with shared form in order to establish connection to a source. He makes the point that in certain circumstances an author's objective is

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>199</sup> Beale, *Handbook*, Location 775.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 767.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Leonard, "Inner-Biblical Allusions," 242.

<sup>204</sup> Leonard, "Inner-Biblical Allusions," 253.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

to deliver a point rather than to indicate a method of reception. In support of his argument, he cites Michael Fishbane's observation that "Materials are always moving from one setting to another, being joined to different genres, and resulting in new redactional units for instruction."<sup>206</sup> Leonard states, "The accumulation of shared language suggests a stronger connection than does a single shared term or phrase."<sup>207</sup> An isolated phrase or term may constitute an allusion, but the likelihood of connection increases with the accumulation of shared terms.

### 1.6.5. Echo

In Biblical reception, "a less clear allusion is called an echo."<sup>208</sup> Steyn refers to "intertextual echoes"<sup>209</sup> in his examination of reception history. The similarity between certain allusions and echoes render the task of drawing meaningful distinctions rather problematic. Beale offers this helpful definition: "... an echo is an allusion that is possibly dependent on the Old Testament text in distinction to a reference that is clearly or probably dependent."<sup>210</sup> He continues with by suggesting that an echo may contain an author's unconscious reference to a text. The dividing line between a very gentle allusion and an echo is almost impossible to define. Hays offers one of the most useful contributions to the identification of echoes. His suggestion will be examined and will furnish a framework for assessing Lincoln's potential use of Biblical echoes.

In his treatment of Paul's use of the Old Testament, Hays suggests that the accuracy of the determination of echoes can be enhanced by the identification of the following five factors. The first is 'availability,' in that the author assumes the reader is familiar with the text from which the echo is derived.<sup>211</sup> The second is 'volume,' which Hays defines as "the degree of explicit repetition of words or syntactical patterns."<sup>212</sup> He also contends that the degree to which the author places rhetorical stress upon the echo can also be an indication of reliance upon a text. The third consideration is the simple factor of the 'recurrence' of an echo within a piece, or

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>208</sup> Corley, Lemke and Lovejoy, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 435.

<sup>209</sup> Steyn, *Extent and Diversity*, 2.

<sup>210</sup> Beale, *Handbook*, Location 769.

<sup>211</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 29.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 30.



within the wider body of the author's work.<sup>213</sup> The fourth is 'thematic coherence.' Hays asserts that an echo can be affirmed when its theme is consistent with the line of argument being developed by the author.<sup>214</sup> In his final factor Hays submits something of a general conclusion to this matter. He states that 'satisfaction' is the ultimate assessment of echoes: "Does the proposed reading make sense? Does it illuminate the surrounding discourse? Does it produce for the reader a satisfying account of the effect of the intertextual relation?"<sup>215</sup>

Hays concedes that his approach contains the potential for some ambiguity; however, he asserts that these are ultimately the most important tests of an echo by the reader. He accepts that some criticism of Hays is valid, while asserting that the methods are primarily a most useful tool for validating textual echoes.<sup>216</sup>

The general weight of scholarship examined here appears to place the ultimate responsibility for the identification of echoes, and indeed allusions, in the hands of the knowledgeable reader. A reader who is able to understand the context of both the author and the text from which echoes may be drawn is encouraged to be cautiously open to the prospect of allusions and echoes. Indeed, Hays expresses the expansive possibility of echoes in this way:

Despite all the careful hedges that we plant around texts, meaning has a way of leaping over, like sparks. Texts are no inert; they burn and throw fragments of flame on their rising heat. Often we succeed in containing the energy, but sometimes the sparks escape and kindle new blazes, reprises of the original fire.<sup>217</sup>

#### **1.6.6. Critical evaluation of allusion and echo**

The verification of Lincoln's potential use of allusions and echoes from the Bible is a challenging exercise. The brief examination of the treatment of scholars in these two areas of Reception Theory has already indicated the difficulties so associated. The final responsibility for individual analysis is placed with the reader. Despite the fact that a definitive analysis of Lincoln's use of allusion and echoes is virtually impossible, some reasonable suggestions can be submitted as his texts are examined.

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>216</sup> Beale, *New Testament Use*, Location 825.

<sup>217</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 33.

When identification of an allusion or an echo is submitted, there are a number of other considerations that require attention as Lincoln's work is inspected, although in the case of allusions Gregory suggests "allusions, if established may be sufficient to indicate use."<sup>218</sup> The evaluation of Lincoln's use of allusions and echoes requires more rigorous inquiry than Gregory considers necessary. The following considerations will be addressed during the progress of this research.

One particular aspect of Lincoln's formative years was his virtual obsession with reading. His love of language would remain and indeed intensify throughout his legal and political career. It is possible that the presence of a biblical allusion or echo may simply indicate Lincoln's use of a pithy or popular phrase, which possessed no more importance than any other linguistically pleasing remark. It is also conceivable that considerations that relate to Lincoln's possible source as being an influential orator or even a Sunday sermon, could also be applied to the identification of allusions and echoes. It is rather less probable that Lincoln would use allusions and echoes to placate the Christian populace, as he might have done with quotations and paraphrases. It is not an impossible suggestion, but the use of these more subtle methods of reception might not be considered the most obvious way to make a speech sound more appealing to a Christian audience. However, these options will all be examined in the main body of this thesis.

A particular matter for consideration is the possibility that Lincoln's extensive Bible reading resulted in his thinking becoming so entrenched with the language of the King James Bible, that it simply entered his compositions subconsciously. Indeed, Patrick Fairbairn, who wrote during Lincoln's lifetime, submitted that the New Testament authors engaged in a subconscious allusion or echo of the scriptures. He suggested that "their thoughts and language merely derived from these the form and direction, which by a kind of sacred instinct they took."<sup>219</sup> Jeannine Brown also acknowledges this possibility: "There will be occasion when they will echo or evoke an Old Testament text or idea without being fully aware that they have done so."<sup>220</sup> This possible factor in Lincoln's reception of the Bible will be considered during the progress of this thesis.

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<sup>218</sup> Gregory, *Reception of Luke and Acts*, 6.

<sup>219</sup> Patrick Fairbairn, *Hermeneutical Manual: Introduction to the Exegetical Study of the Scriptures of the New Testament* (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman and Co., 1859), 391.

<sup>220</sup> Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007) Kindle edition, Location 2225.

### **1.6.7. In conclusion**

Beale's contention is that it is difficult to produce concrete rules for establishing what, if any, aspects of Reception Theory are at play in a given circumstance. He suggests that a case-by-case approach is the most prudent.<sup>221</sup>

No individual, school, or group does or can own Biblical reception. There is, and can be, no single common denominator between these readings, as their richness and value lies in their multiplicity and diversity.<sup>222</sup>

Consequently, Lincoln's particular reception of the Bible will be analysed in relation to the categories of quotation, paraphrase, allusion and echo as part of the attempt to grasp its significance within his political speeches and writings.

### **1.7. Historical narrative and context**

This thesis is essentially an examination of the place of the Bible in the political career of Lincoln; it is not a biography. However, Lincoln's political speeches and writings are understood in the light of the historical context into which he was speaking. In particular, the details of the progress of the war will be offered in as brief a form as possible, to enable the reader to contextualise Lincoln's speeches and writing. For the purpose at hand, historical narrative and contextual material will be limited to the need to understand Lincoln and his engagement with the Bible. There will be some aspects of the Lincoln narrative that are of immense historical and political importance, but are unrelated to the subject of this thesis and will therefore not be included.

### **1.8. Structure of the thesis**

The task of examining Lincoln's use of the Bible in the context of such a turbulent narrative requires a degree of organisational discipline. The following construction will be offered in this project.

#### **1.8.1. Chronology**

The CW will be examined and Lincoln's use of the Bible will be inspected. It will be prudent to undertake this examination in chronological order. The narrative of

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<sup>221</sup> Beale, *Handbook*, Location 770.

<sup>222</sup> Lieb, Mason and Roberts, *Oxford Handbook*, 7.

Lincoln's life, times and career will illuminate his texts. There are occasions when strict chronological structure becomes a hindrance, and so the issues of Lincoln's treatment of the Will of God will be dealt with in one particular section. Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address is of such peculiar importance that it will be dealt with in a chapter of its own, which will prove a slight deviation from the exact chronology.

### **1.8.2. Evaluation**

The general pattern of the thesis will seek to evaluate Lincoln's use of the Bible in the chronology of his writing. The issues and implication of his engagement with the Bibles will generally be dealt with as they chronologically arise. The nature of this thesis will produce developing conclusions in an apparently random order, because Lincoln used the Bible for the occasion at hand, and the findings of this investigation will reflect this.

### **1.9. In conclusion to Chapter One**

Fehrenbacher's comment illustrated the coverage that Lincoln has been afforded since 1865:

It would be possible to read a different book about Abraham Lincoln in every week of a long lifetime. Yet all the vast accumulation of reminiscence, tribute, and scholarship leaves us with a figure still partly lost in the silences of the past and obscured by mists of an extravagant legend.<sup>223</sup>

Despite the fact that so much attention has been devoted to Lincoln, there is still something of a gap in the issue of the extent and significance of Lincoln's use of the Bible. The intention of this thesis is to seek to address this gap in Lincoln scholarship. The need for an exhaustive examination of CW to seek to establish the way in which Lincoln used the Bible is perhaps overdue. It will also be of value to critically assess the issue of whether Lincoln's engagement with the Bible was cosmetic or essential to his career and legacy. The ease with which Herndon's opinions have divided scholars also requires attention. However, the question of significance is of primary concern in

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<sup>223</sup> Don E. Fehrenbacher, ed. *Abraham Lincoln: A Documentary Portrait Through His Speeches and Writings* (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1964. Reprint, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), xiii.

this thesis. This will seek to understand whether the place of the Bible in Lincoln's political career was essential or merely a feature of his composition.

The fact that Lincoln used the Bible more than any other president is a matter of historical fact. In the light of this fact, is not unreasonable to submit that an attempt to understand Lincoln without appreciation of his engagement with the Bible is to miss an essential aspect of his person, and his ultimate success and legacy. Dodge considered Lincoln's literary development and offered this observation: "We are straightway impressed by the fact that at all stages of his development Lincoln refers to or quotes from the Bible."<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Daniel K. Dodge, *Abraham Lincoln: The Evolution of his Literary Style*. Vol. 1. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1900), 17-18.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE FORMATIVE YEARS**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter will focus on Lincoln's early life, extending to the middle of the 1850s, and the beginning of his unexpected rise to the highest office. Lincoln's formative years furnished him with his love of reading, which was particularly expressed through the King James Bible. He would leave the simplicity of his family's cabin and in New Salem would learn the ways of business, eventually qualifying as a lawyer. It was in New Salem that Lincoln would take his steps into the world of politics. The pursuit of a legal career took Lincoln to Springfield, which would be the geographical context for the years before the Presidency. He served in a number of political capacities, including a single Congressional term in Washington. During these years, the influence of the Bible would develop in Lincoln's life; this will be examined in his political speeches and writings. The narrative of this chapter covers Lincoln's life until 1858, and concludes with his Peoria Address. Lincoln's thinking was influenced by the Bible, which he did not limit to the realm of religion alone. On different occasions, and with considerable dexterity, Lincoln used the Bible to help deliver his political message.

#### **2.2. Lincoln's Formative Years**

Lincoln's early life does not make for an easy study. To say that he grew up in obscurity is an understatement.<sup>1</sup> Wilson points out the fact that Lincoln's early years have not been given the necessary treatment required to understand early influences, which would ultimately affect the sixteenth Presidency.<sup>2</sup> Information is sporadic and consists mainly of interviews with Lincoln's family and neighbours, which Herndon conducted. These interviews contain numerous understandable biases, as people accidentally and deliberately exaggerated their contribution to the Lincoln narrative. However, the facts are clear enough to draw firm conclusions on the nature of the

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen B. Oates, *With Malice Toward None: A life of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1994), 7.

<sup>2</sup> "Scholars and other students of Lincoln have virtually abandoned his early life as a field for serious investigation and have instead concentrated their efforts almost entirely on his presidential years." Douglas L. Wilson, *Honor's Voice: The Transformation of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 4.

influence of the Bible upon the boy, who would employ its text and message to a much greater degree than any other US President.

Lincoln was rather private concerning his formative years: “There was something about his origin he never cared to dwell upon.”<sup>3</sup> Davis<sup>4</sup> told Herndon that he found Lincoln to be an extremely private man.<sup>5</sup> The year before his election to the Presidency, he furnished Jesse Fell<sup>6</sup> with an autobiographical sketch. Lincoln offered the following introduction: “Herewith is a little sketch, as you requested. There is not much of it, for the reason, I suppose, that there is not much of me.”<sup>7</sup> In 1860 Lincoln secured the Republican Presidential nomination, and *The Chicago Tribune*’s J.L. Scripps was dispatched to Lincoln’s Springfield office to learn about the new candidate. Lincoln informed Scripps that he was mistaken in his belief that questioning him on his origins would be of benefit to the electorate’s understanding.<sup>8</sup>

Despite Lincoln’s dismissal of his prairie years, universal wisdom asserts the importance of childhood influences in the formation of the adult.<sup>9</sup> Those who witnessed Lincoln’s early years could not have predicted the lofty ascent that lay ahead; however, they were in agreement that Lincoln was no ordinary boy. Warren expressed the challenges and importance of studying the early years: “We cannot now recapture the inner life of these early years ... but by cautious deductions, we can hope to derive some of the developing traits which were precursors of the personality that has been so copiously delineated in biography, in history, poetry, and memorial art.”<sup>10</sup> In order to understand something of the influence of the Bible in Lincoln’s formation, a brief narrative of his early years is required. On 12<sup>th</sup> June 1806 Thomas Lincoln and

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<sup>3</sup> William H. Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln: The True Story of a Great Life, Vol. 1.* (Chicago: Belford-Clarke Co., 1890),1.

<sup>4</sup> Judge David Davis (1815-1886) was a close associate of Lincoln’s during the 1850’s in Illinois, he was instrumental in securing the Republican Presidential nomination. Willard L. King, *Lincoln’s Manager: David Davis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 191-195.

<sup>5</sup> “I knew the man so well; he was the most reticent, secretive man I ever saw or expect to see.” Herndon, *Lincoln, Vol. 3.* 441.

<sup>6</sup> Jesse W. Fell (1808-1887) was a close friend and associate of Lincoln, from 1834 until the President’s assassination. Oates, *With Malice Toward None*, 22.

<sup>7</sup> Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 3.* 511.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Burlingame, *The Inner World of Abraham Lincoln* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 255-256.

<sup>9</sup> “We have read Buckle’s *History of Civilization* to little effect if we have not learned that the development of an individual or a nation is profoundly influenced by environment.” Barton, *Soul of Abraham*, 29.

<sup>10</sup> Warren, *Lincoln’s Youth*, xviii.

Nancy Hanks were married<sup>11</sup> and subsequently had three children: Sarah, Abraham and Thomas, who died as an infant.<sup>12</sup>

In 1816 Thomas moved his young family to Spencer County, in the new state of Indiana.<sup>13</sup> The family settled in what soon became known as the Little Pigeon Creek Community,<sup>14</sup> where life was both hard and hazardous.<sup>15</sup> The farm and log cabin that Thomas built<sup>16</sup> would be the scene for the remainder of Lincoln's childhood and adolescence. The stability of this tiny world was tragically shattered on the 5<sup>th</sup> October 1818, when Lincoln's mother died.<sup>17</sup> Fourteen months later, Thomas left his children and returned to Kentucky to marry Sarah Bush Johnson.<sup>18</sup> Thomas transported his bride and her three children back to his Indiana cabin. Sarah adorned the Lincoln cabin with some fine possessions;<sup>19</sup> to Lincoln's delight, this included a number of excellent books.<sup>20</sup> Sarah brought stability and affection into the Lincoln home.<sup>21</sup> Thomas made it possible for his son to attend whatever schooling was briefly available.<sup>22</sup> Lincoln recalled: "I was raised to farm work which I continued till I was twenty two."<sup>23</sup> One particularly formative activity during this period was Lincoln's developing passion for reading.

### **2.3. Lincoln's Introduction to the Bible**

Lincoln did not simply pick up the Bible to enhance his prospects when his political career began to gain momentum. His passion for reading led him to immerse himself in the Bible, and the Christian context of his family would have a profound and lasting effect upon him.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 3; 10.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 26; Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3. 511.

<sup>14</sup> Oates, *Malice Toward None*, 7.

<sup>15</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3. 511.

<sup>16</sup> Warren, *Lincoln's Youth*, 11.

<sup>17</sup> Edward Steers, *Lincoln Legends* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 2007), 65.

<sup>18</sup> Sandburg, *Prairie Years*, 12; Warren, *Lincoln's Youth*, 57.

<sup>19</sup> Sandburg, *Prairie Years*, 13.

<sup>20</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 1. 35.

<sup>21</sup> Guelzo, *Redeemer President*, 31.

<sup>22</sup> Richard L. Miller, *Lincoln and his World: The Early Years* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2006), 25-26; Holzer, *I Knew Him*, 18.

<sup>23</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3. 511-512.



### 2.3.1. Books in general

The few precious volumes to which he had access fuelled Lincoln's love of reading.<sup>24</sup> Eyewitnesses testified to the fact that books were immeasurably important to him. Hanks<sup>25</sup> recalled, "Abraham read constantly when he had an opportunity."<sup>26</sup> Lincoln devoted his spare time to what Miller describes as "his stunning work of self-education."<sup>27</sup> Nicolay and Hay<sup>28</sup> listed some of the books that Lincoln read as being Aesop's *Fables*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *A History of the United States* and Weems' *Life of Washington*.<sup>29</sup> Most commentators and biographers agree that his first major experience of reading was the Lincoln family Bible.<sup>30</sup>

Lincoln's stepmother was not well educated, but "she loved knowledge, and inspired in her step-son a love for books."<sup>31</sup> Herndon's interview with Sarah revealed the boy's thirst for knowledge. Hanks expressed the primary passion of the boy: "Abe was getting hungry for books, reading everything he could lay his hands on."<sup>32</sup> In the same paragraph he described Lincoln as a 'stubborn reader.'<sup>33</sup> Those who were part of this frontier community remembered Lincoln "ranging the countryside for books," and "those that he read he devoured."<sup>34</sup> It was not a natural feature of frontier life that a boy should become an avid reader, especially with books in such desperately short supply. Nicolay and Hay concluded that his hunger for knowledge could not have been inspired by the prairie lifestyle; "in the case of this ungainly boy there was no necessity of any external incentive. A thirst for knowledge as a means of rising in the world was innate in him."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Lowell H. Harrison, *Lincoln of Kentucky* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2000), 35.

<sup>25</sup> John Hanks (1802-1889) was Abraham Lincoln's cousin on his mother's side.

<sup>26</sup> Ward Hill Lamon, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln: His Birth to His Inauguration as President* (Boston: J.R. Osgood and Co., 1872), 37.

<sup>27</sup> William Lee Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues: An Ethical Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 44.

<sup>28</sup> John George Nicolay (1832-1901) and John Milton Hay (1838-1905) served together as private secretaries to President Lincoln throughout his administration. They published their joint multi volume biography of Lincoln's Life.

<sup>29</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1*. 35.

<sup>30</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 2*; Carwardine, *Purpose and Power: Guelzo, Redeemer President*; Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1*; Thomas, *Lincoln*; Warren, *Lincoln's Youth*; Ronald C. White, *A. Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 2009).

<sup>31</sup> John B. Remsburg, *Abraham Lincoln: Was he a Christian?* (New York: The Truth Seeker Co., 1893), 193.

<sup>32</sup> Holzer, *I Knew Him*, 19-20.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*, 15.

<sup>35</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln, Vol. 1*. 33.

### **2.3.2. The Bible**

Lincoln would employ the text and message of the Bible to considerable effect as his political career developed. This section will seek to offer some explanation of the context in which the young Lincoln began his engagement with the Bible.

### **2.3.3. The context for Lincoln's introduction to the Bible**

The examination of Lincoln's use of the Bible requires an understanding of how his biblical knowledge evolved. In order to see how the foundations for Lincoln's use of the Bible were laid in his youth, a brief examination of the wider religious environment will provide valuable context. The context for Lincoln's early reading of the Bible was the Baptist Church to which his family belonged. This can be better understood in the perspective of the national spiritual climate, as it affected the frontier Baptist communities. Lincoln's Baptist family home was the immediate context in which the Bible's influence first touched Lincoln.

#### **2.3.3.1. The Second Great Awakening**

The Christian revival known as the Second Great Awakening<sup>36</sup> is generally considered to have begun in June 1800 in Red River, Kentucky.<sup>37</sup> These meetings produced unexpected and remarkable reactions from the crowds in attendance, some of which "trembled under the terror of divine judgement, screamed for mercy, and experienced an emotional ecstasy of assurance of their forgiveness."<sup>38</sup> Presbyterian minister B.W. Stone recorded his first experience of such a meeting:

The scene to me was new and passing strange. It baffled description. Many, very many, fell down, as men slain in battle, and continued for hours together in apparently breathless and motionless state. After lying thus for hours they would arise shouting deliverance and then would address the surrounding multitude.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The (First) Great Awakening is the title ascribed to the religious revival, which occurred in New England in the 1740's, whose most famous exponent was Jonathon Edwards. The Second Great awakening is compared with the events of this 18<sup>th</sup> Century Revival.

<sup>37</sup> Barry Hankins, *The Second Great Awakening and the Transcendentalists* (Westport: Greenwood, 2004), 8.

<sup>38</sup> Terry D. Bilhartz, *Urban Religion and the Second Great Awakening* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986), 83.

<sup>39</sup> Roger Finke, and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in our Religious Economy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 92-93.

The Awakening became a significant religious and cultural influence on early to mid-nineteenth century American life,<sup>40</sup> spreading as far as the western prairie communities.<sup>41</sup> It would produce some of the greatest figures in the history of American Christianity: Richard Allen,<sup>42</sup> Timothy Dwight,<sup>43</sup> Lyman Beecher<sup>44</sup> and Charles Finney, who is regarded as “the father of modern revivalism.”<sup>45</sup> D’Souza draws the following conclusion on the legacy of the Awakening, which he claims “set off the chain of events that produced the Civil War, the end of slavery, and America’s new birth of freedom.”<sup>46</sup>

One of the key features of the Awakening was the centrality of the Bible, on which Beardsley comments thus: “The principal means relied upon was the preaching of the word.”<sup>47</sup> This fervour, with its reliance on the preaching of the Bible, provided some of the wider context for Lincoln’s introduction to the scriptures.

### 2.3.3.2. The Little Pigeon Creek Baptist Church

America’s frontier settlers were generally divided into two Christian traditions, Methodist and Baptist.<sup>48</sup> Lincoln’s parents were practising Baptists.<sup>49</sup> The Baptists of the Antebellum did not operate under a uniform code, either theologically or experientially.<sup>50</sup> Lincoln’s family devoted themselves to the Little Pigeon Baptist Church. The soteriology of the church was a rather extreme reflection of Calvinism.

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<sup>40</sup> Guelzo, *Redeemer President*, 15.

<sup>41</sup> Frank G. Beardsley, *A History of American Revivals*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: American Tract Society, 1912), 85.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Allen (1760-1831) was the founder of the first African American Protestant denomination in the United States. Newman, Richard S. *Freedom’s Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

<sup>43</sup> Timothy Dwight (1752-1817) was a grandson of Jonathon Edwards. He was president of Yale College for 22 years until his death. Beardsley, *A History of American Revivals*.

<sup>44</sup> Lyman Beecher (1775-1863) helped in the formation of the American Bible Society. He was the father of noted preacher Henry Ward Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. [www.ohiohistorycentral.org](http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org) accessed 30<sup>th</sup> April 2009; Debby Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher* (New York: Three Leaves Press, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> Hankins, *Second Great Awakening*, 137.

<sup>46</sup> Dinesh D’Souza, *What’s So Great About Christianity* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2007), 73.

<sup>47</sup> Beardsley, *American Revivals*, 97.

<sup>48</sup> Finke and Stark, *Churching of America*, 2.

<sup>49</sup> Warren, *Lincoln’s Youth*, 114.

<sup>50</sup> The following is a list of the groupings of Baptists which existed during the period of the Second Great awakening; Separate, Regular, United, General, Particular, Calvinist, Free-Will, Primitive, and Two-Seed-in-the-Spirit Baptists. Daniel W. Howe, *What God Hath Wrought: The transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2007), 180; Edward P. Brand, *Illinois Baptists: A History* (Illinois: Pantagraph Co, 1930).

Some believed in missions; most did not, and professional trained ministry was frowned upon. This form of Baptist expression became known as ‘Hard-Shell.’<sup>51</sup>

Lincoln certainly attended church more than he attended school.<sup>52</sup> This congregation placed great importance on the Bible. Article two of the fellowship’s constitution stated: “We believe the Old and New Testaments are the words of God there are every thing contained there in necessary for mans Salvation and rule of faith and practice.”<sup>53</sup> The preaching of the Bible both influenced and amused Lincoln. He was not entirely at ease with some aspects of his local church, but it did make an impression upon him. Opinion is divided as to the effect of the local preaching upon Lincoln. Sarah told Herndon that “He would hear sermons preached – come home – take the children out – get on a stump or log and almost repeat it word for word.”<sup>54</sup> Burkhimer’s conclusion is that he was “disdainful of clergymen and church services as his impersonation of ministers shows.”<sup>55</sup> Scripps made this assessment of the preachers that Lincoln heard in his youth: “Many of these early pioneer preachers where gifted with a rare eloquence, these men almost always moved the hearts and wrought upon the imagination of their hearers.”<sup>56</sup> The fact is that an impression was made. The early engagement of Lincoln with the Bible was given its context by his family’s Baptist congregation.

### **2.3.3.3. The Bible in the Lincoln home**

Lincoln did not enjoy an easy childhood, but his family gave him a number of values that contributed toward the formation of his remarkable character. His family introduced him to the Bible in the context of a strict, and possibly on occasion excessive, expression of the Christian faith. Indeed, “The Biblical teachings would have an effect on his daily life and behaviour.”<sup>57</sup> The relationship Lincoln had with the Bible would not have been the same without the years in the Little Pigeon Creek Cabin. Barton’s reflection of Lincoln’s early reading of the Bible was that it had a

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<sup>51</sup> Warren, *Lincoln’s Youth*, 114; Wolf, *Almost Chosen People*, 36; Henry C. Vedder, *A Short History of the Baptists* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), 388.

<sup>52</sup> Miller, *Lincoln and His World*, 58.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>54</sup> Holzer, *As I Knew Him*, 13.

<sup>55</sup> Burkhimer, *Lincoln’s Christianity*, 7.

<sup>56</sup> John L. Scripps, *Life of Lincoln* (Detroit: The Cranbrook Press, 1900), 21.

<sup>57</sup> “Politician Comes to Faith, Lincoln at the Cross.” *The Lutheran Layman*, June 1988. Lincoln Collection, ALPL.

direct bearing upon his Presidential speeches and writings, "...it became so much part of him as visibly and permanently to give shape to his literary style and to his habits of thoughts."<sup>58</sup>

Daily reading of the Bible and the saying of grace before meals was the regular pattern in the Lincoln cabin.<sup>59</sup> It is also noteworthy that Lincoln recalled his mother telling her children Bible stories: "I recall her prayers that she was wont to offer on Sundays with her children after she had read to them stories from the Bible, They have followed me everywhere and have remained with me all through life."<sup>60</sup> When Lincoln learned to read, the Bible was one of the only books in the home, and so he spent many hours immersed in its text. Robert Browne was a student in Bloomington when Lincoln visited the city as a lawyer. Browne shared a room with Lincoln and claimed to have engaged the older man in conversation and made his friendly acquaintance. He claimed that the future president led him to the conclusion that "The Bible was his first textbook, and held its place in his mind throughout all his life."<sup>61</sup> Indeed Burlingame suggests that Lincoln had an emotional attachment to the Biblical stories in that in his youth they reminded him of his mother, who was in the habit of sharing them with him.<sup>62</sup>

It has been mentioned that the Bible Lincoln read was the family's *Ostervald Bible*.<sup>63</sup> Sarah revealed to Herndon that Lincoln methodically studied. She explained that he would keep writing and repeating facts until they were permanently fixed in his mind.<sup>64</sup> Brooks<sup>65</sup> recorded Lincoln's early exposure to the Bible and that he "could repeat from memory whole chapters of the Bible."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Barton, *Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, 275.

<sup>59</sup> Miller, *Lincoln and His World*, 61-62.

<sup>60</sup> Carl T. Wettstein, *Was Abraham Lincoln an Infidel?* (Boston: The C.M. Clark Publishing Company, 1910), 70.

<sup>61</sup> Robert H. Browne, *Abraham Lincoln and the Men of His Time* (Chicago: Blakely-Oswald Printing Co., 1907), 82.

<sup>62</sup> Burlingame, *Inner World of Abraham Lincoln*, 94.

<sup>63</sup> William Osborn Stoddard, *The Boy Lincoln* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1905), 228.

<sup>64</sup> "When he came across a passage that struck him he would write it down on boards if he had no paper...then he would re-write it – look at it, repeat it...He would then repeat it over to himself again and again...when it was fixed in his mind to suit him he became easy and he never lost that fact or his understanding of it." Holzer, *As I Knew Him*, 15.

<sup>65</sup> Noah Brooks (1830-1903) became a good friend of Abraham Lincoln in 1856 when they met in Illinois. He used his work as a journalist to write columns which were fiercely loyal to President Lincoln. Michael Burlingame, ed. *Civil War Despatches of Noah Brooks* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

<sup>66</sup> Noah Brooks, *Abraham Lincoln: His Youth and Early Manhood, With a Brief Account of His Later Life* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1901), 24.

The issue at hand is not simply that Lincoln read the Bible a great deal during his youth. This research relates to the nature of the influence of the Bible on his political career. Lincoln's reading of *The Life of Washington* by Mason Locke Weems influenced him. Warren stated that "This Volume influenced him more than any other early book except the Bible,"<sup>67</sup> the point being that Warren's exhaustive study of Lincoln's early life considered that the Bible was the most influential literary feature of Lincoln's youth. The contribution of the Bible was not simply as a religious, or even moral, work. Warren submitted that

There unfolded before him in his early youth a panorama of characters from both Old and New Testament – men, women, and children, who became imaginary tenants of the cabin home, almost real people brought alive by the imagination of a young lad thirsting for knowledge.<sup>68</sup>

Warren's case contains a little narrative license, but considering the almost universal opinion that Lincoln was desperate for knowledge, his opinion is worthy of positive note.

In 1901 Theodore Roosevelt<sup>69</sup> addressed the American Bible Society with his assessment of Lincoln. Roosevelt suggested that his knowledge of the Bible had been the result of a lifetime's development. He claimed that Lincoln

Built up his entire reading upon his study of the Bible. He had mastered it absolutely; mastered it so that he became almost a man of one book who knew that book, and instinctively put into practice what he had been taught therein.<sup>70</sup>

A modern biographer drawing a similar conclusion is Carwardine, who submitted that

Above all he encountered the King James Bible. Through his mother's teaching and his own study he acquired a command of the scriptures, which would continue to impress observers and inform his rhetoric throughout his life.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Warren, *Lincoln's Youth*, 91.

<sup>68</sup> Warren, *Lincoln's Youth*, 32.

<sup>69</sup> Theodore D. Roosevelt (1858-1919) served with distinction as the much-acclaimed 26<sup>th</sup> US President. Edmund Morris, *Theodore Rex* (London: HarperCollins Publishers 2001).

<sup>70</sup> Samuel T. Jackson, *Lincoln's Use of the Bible* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1909), 11.

<sup>71</sup> Carwadine, *Purpose and Power*, 35.

Kershner suggested this reasonable point: “It is scarcely conceivable that Lincoln could have failed to receive some deep and lasting impressions from the religious environment in which his childhood was steeped.”<sup>72</sup>

During the sesquicentennial of Lincoln’s birth, Wolf considered his use of the Bible. He submitted that Lincoln displayed a “knowledge of the Bible far exceeded the content-grasp of most present day clergymen.”<sup>73</sup> The foundation of this extensive knowledge came from Lincoln’s exhaustive reading of the family’s *Ostervald Bible* in his youth; historians of all persuasions almost universally uphold this position.

## **2.4. The New Salem Years**

Lincoln’s first permanent steps into the slightly wider world continued to provide insight into his personal formation. Discussions within a more challenging group of thinkers would challenge Lincoln’s view of faith and the Bible itself. In New Salem, Lincoln experienced something of a period of scepticism, which some historians contest would remain his default spiritual position for the rest of his life. The latter view will be challenged by the progress of this thesis and evidence will be presented to the effect that Lincoln would emerge from this scepticism and would steadily increase his use of the Bible in his political composition, the culmination of which was his Second Inaugural Address.<sup>74</sup>

### **2.4.1. Lincoln in New Salem: A brief narrative**

On the 20<sup>th</sup> January 1828, Lincoln’s beloved sister Sarah died in childbirth.<sup>75</sup> Soon after this tragic event, Lincoln secured a position on a cargo flatboat transporting produce to New Orleans.<sup>76</sup> This opportunity introduced Lincoln to the South and gave him his first formative view of the grim realities of chattel slavery: “He saw negroes in chains-whipped and scourged.”<sup>77</sup> In the spring of 1830 Thomas relocated his family to Macon County, Illinois.<sup>78</sup> Lincoln helped his father with the move and establishment of the homestead, and then, having reached the age of 21, he was free

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<sup>72</sup> Frederick D. Kershner, “Abraham Lincoln and the Disciples,” *The Shane Quarterly*, April 1943. Lincoln Collection, ALPL.

<sup>73</sup> Wolf, *Almost Chosen People*, 39.

<sup>74</sup> Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address is examined in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>76</sup> Miller, *Lincoln and his World*, 81.

<sup>77</sup> Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1*. 75.

<sup>78</sup> Brooks, *Youth and Early Manhood*, 30.

to make his own way in the world. Lincoln made the acquaintance of local businessman Denton Offutt,<sup>79</sup> who offered him and John Hanks the job of taking a cargo back to New Orleans.<sup>80</sup> When Lincoln returned after their successful trip, Offutt appointed him as the manager of his small general store in the village of New Salem, Illinois.<sup>81</sup> During the years 1831-1837, New Salem would be the context for Lincoln's transition from storekeeper to lawyer. Despite the village's rather aspirational name, it never became more than "a roaring pioneer settlement,"<sup>82</sup> and, as Charnwood noted, "a cock fighting and whisky drinking society."<sup>83</sup>

In New Salem, Lincoln would make friends and influence people. Lincoln described himself arriving in New Salem as "A piece of floating drift wood."<sup>84</sup> It appears that he did not drift for long and applied himself to a variety of tasks with single-mindedness. He navigated river crafts, was a clerk in a general store, became the manager of the local mill and served as New Salem's Post Master. He became a county surveyor<sup>85</sup> and, after intense personal study, passed the Bar exams and received his license to practice law in 1836.<sup>86</sup> In the middle of all this activity, he volunteered for the County Militia to fight in what became known as the Black Hawk Indian War.<sup>87</sup> His comrades elected Lincoln Captain of his company, an honour that gave him great satisfaction.<sup>88</sup> Although the company never actually engaged the enemy, Lincoln won respect for his conduct as a leader.<sup>89</sup>

#### **2.4.2. The Christian context of New Salem**

New Salem had no permanent church congregation, but the effects of the Second Great Awakening were in evidence with regular revival camps and meetings.<sup>90</sup> The

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<sup>79</sup> Nicolay and Hay *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1*. 70.

<sup>80</sup> Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*, 21.

<sup>81</sup> Lord Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: Holt and Co., 1916. Reprint, New York: Madison Books, 1996), 52.

<sup>82</sup> Oates, *Malice Toward None*, 17.

<sup>83</sup> Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, 52.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*, 24.

<sup>85</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1*. 115.

<sup>86</sup> Ostergard, *Inspired Wisdom*, 16.

<sup>87</sup> The Black Hawk War. In May 1832 Black Hawk, the war leader of the Sauks and the Foxes re-entered Illinois. Initially their migration seemed peaceful, but violence eventually erupted and was repelled by the State militia. Lewis James, [www.lincoln.lib.niu.edu/blackhawk/page2d.html](http://www.lincoln.lib.niu.edu/blackhawk/page2d.html). Accessed 12<sup>th</sup> April 2009.

<sup>88</sup> Lincoln to Fell, "I was elected a Captain of volunteers – a success which gave me more pleasure than any I have had since." Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 3*. 512.

<sup>89</sup> Hank H. Cox, *Lincoln and the Sioux Uprising of 1862* (Nashville: Cumberland House, 2005) Kindle edition, Location 2175; White, *Lincoln*, Locations 990-1017.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.



celebrated Methodist Peter Cartwright<sup>91</sup> spoke at “riotous camp meetings, exhorting the New Salemites until they shook and howled.”<sup>92</sup> These camp meetings featured ministry that “reeked of brimstone and bristled with dogma and doctrine.”<sup>93</sup> Lincoln was ill at ease with some of the intensity of these meetings, although Oates submits that he still believed in God, whom he considered “a superior being who endowed people with individual destinies.”<sup>94</sup>

### 2.4.3. Lincoln’s period of scepticism

In New Salem, Lincoln was free from both the positive and negative trappings of his Baptist upbringing. The intellectual enlargement that would take place in the Salem years would test the Christian faith of Lincoln’s youth. Most scholars regard these years as something of a testing of Lincoln’s Christian belief, and in particular his relationship with the Bible. Birkhimer summarises historical opinion regarding this period, claiming that Lincoln’s scepticism “flourished when he left his parents’ home in 1831.”<sup>95</sup> In his father’s house he was surrounded by Baptists, while in New Salem he encountered free thinkers and religious sceptics.

The owner of the Tavern, James Rutledge, founded the New Salem Debating Society that convened twice a month.<sup>96</sup> During the winter of 1831, Lincoln was a regular attendee at the debates. Herndon recorded the fact that “A good deal of religious scepticism existed in New Salem.”<sup>97</sup> He borrowed books from neighbours and immersed himself in the works of Volney,<sup>98</sup> Voltaire,<sup>99</sup> and Thomas Paine.<sup>100</sup> He

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<sup>91</sup> Peter Cartwright (1785-1872) was both a Methodist preacher and political opponent of Lincoln’s in local and national politics. Robert C. Bray, *Peter Cartwright: Legendary Frontier Preacher* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005).

<sup>92</sup> Oates, *Malice Toward None*, 18.

<sup>93</sup> Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*, 25.

<sup>94</sup> Oates, *Malice Toward None*, 29.

<sup>95</sup> Birkhimer, *Lincoln’s Christianity*, 19.

<sup>96</sup> Guelzo, *Redeemer President*, 49.

<sup>97</sup> Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1*. 125.

<sup>98</sup> Constantin-Francois de Chasseboeuf, Count de Volney (1757-1820) was a French author, historian and philosopher. Nicolas Bunnin and Yu Jiyun, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004) 727.

<sup>99</sup> Francois- Marie Arouet (Voltaire) (1694-1778), was a French Philosopher, playwright, novelist, and historian. He was an influential figure of the Enlightenment. John Morley, *Voltaire* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1872. Reprint, New York: Lennox Hill Publishing Co., 1973); Margaret C. Jacob, *The Enlightenment: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St.Martins, 2001).

<sup>100</sup> Thomas Paine (1737-1809) was one of the USA’s founding fathers. His 1794 work ‘The Age of Reason’ was a defence of Deism and an attack on traditional religion, seeking to point out apparent defects in the Bible. Mark Philp, ed. *Thomas Paine: Rights of Man; Common Sense and Other Political Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Encyclopaedia Britannica *The Founding Fathers:*

grew in his appreciation of Shakespeare and became impressed by Robert Burns's poetry, Burns being "another free-thinking refugee from Calvinism."<sup>101</sup>

In evaluating Lincoln's reading of the 18<sup>th</sup> century sceptics, there is no reason to think that his brilliant and independent mind did not approach sceptical writing with the same hunger to learn with which he approached all inquiry. A New Salem resident, Isaac Coggdall, recalled how "his mind was full of terrible inquiry – and was sceptical in a good sense."<sup>102</sup> On a number of occasions, Matheny<sup>103</sup> spoke to Herndon about Lincoln's sceptical period. He eventually concluded that "Lincoln would appear to be ridiculing not so much the Bible but more the naiveté of many around him who took every word to be literally true."<sup>104</sup> The information gained from Lincoln's contemporaries is of value, but their assessment is certainly open to scrutiny. He was sceptical about the claims of the Bible; this was possibly initiated by his juvenile experience of Church, coupled with his reading of especially Paine, to which Wilson accredits much of this scepticism.<sup>105</sup>

In 1834 Lincoln apparently wrote a paper that became known as *A Little Book on Infidelity*. Its contents are lost to history. His friends considered the contents so inflammatory that they dissuaded Lincoln from his original intention, namely to send it to a newspaper for publication. Lincoln's friend Samuel Hill is claimed to have burned the composition.<sup>106</sup> The few who claimed acquaintance with this paper suggest it attacked the divinity of Christ, as well as the inspiration of Scripture.<sup>107</sup> There is no real doubt that Lincoln soon walked back from the brutality of this most pointed moment of scepticism. It is possibly a reaction to the strict and unquestioning nature of the faith of his childhood, and even a further reaction born out of heartbreak<sup>108</sup> from the death of Anne Rutledge.<sup>109</sup> There is some evidence suggesting that the paper

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*An Essential Guide to the Men Who Made America* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2007); Joseph J. Ellis, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* (New York: Vantage Books, 2002).

<sup>101</sup> Guelzo, *Redeemer President*, 50.

<sup>102</sup> Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis, *Herndon's informants; Letters, Interviews and Statements about Abraham Lincoln* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 441.

<sup>103</sup> James H. Matheny (1818-1890) Springfield attorney and close friend of Abraham Lincoln's.

<sup>104</sup> Burkholder, *Lincoln's Christianity*, 30.

<sup>105</sup> Wilson, *Honours Voice*, 77-80.

<sup>106</sup> Barton, *Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, 150.

<sup>107</sup> Burkholder, *Lincoln's Christianity*, 27.

<sup>108</sup> Douglas L. Wilson, *Lincoln Before Washington: New Perspectives on the Illinois Years* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 42.

<sup>109</sup> Anne Rutledge (1813-1829) was the daughter of one of the founders of New Salem. Rumours have persisted regarding the depth of feeling between Ann and Lincoln. It is clear that whether he was 'in love' with her or not, she was very dear to him and her untimely death profoundly affected Lincoln. Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1*. Location 2951.

was not a tractate on infidelity, but was actually an account or letter, which contained some personal details about those who wished it destroyed. In 1874 a letter was published which had been written by a man known as Mentor Graham, who had an academic and personal influence on Lincoln.<sup>110</sup> The letter stated that the so-called book on infidelity never existed and that the paper, which Hill incinerated, was an account of a personal nature, which a number of associates wanted removed.<sup>111</sup>

During this period of scepticism it is not necessarily accurate to state that Lincoln had assumed a new position from which he argued. From the various contemporary accounts, it is more likely that he was merely asking searching questions. If Lincoln's lost paper on infidelity was an accurate rendering of his passionately held views, the question reasonably arises as to why he did not simply rewrite it, or verbally restate these beliefs. Indeed, the study of his future career demonstrates that Lincoln was not a man who shrank from holding a potentially unpopular opinion. The fact is that Lincoln spent the rest of his life and career publicly stating positions which were unrecognisable as those he is claimed to have written in his lost paper. It would appear that Lincoln's scepticism was not as deep rooted as some have attempted to portray. Indeed the case for Lincoln's own infidelity is almost entirely constructed around his *Little Book on Infidelity*, the only evidence of which is the testimony of a couple of friends, who claimed to have read a document that nobody else ever saw.

This interesting period of Lincoln's development has served to polarize the positions of authors. Those who follow Herndon's lead in dismissing the extent and importance of Lincoln's use of the Bible present his period of scepticism as part of his development away from the Christianity of his youth. Others have questioned the long-term effect of this period upon him. Instead of viewing this as a stepping-stone into long-term scepticism, it is viewed as one aspect of his development that Lincoln moved from during his time in Springfield, Illinois. He had certainly experienced a season in which he deeply questioned, and for a while certainly appeared to have undergone a process of sceptical reflection. However, the evidence from his subsequent life in Springfield and Washington does not suggest that he left New Salem in a condition of infidelity. This was all part of a journey of discovery, as

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<sup>110</sup> B.F. Irwin, "The Evidence: Statements of those who knew Lincoln," *The Illinois Journal*, 16<sup>th</sup> May 1874.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

Charnwood surmises: “a mind too original to be subdued to its surroundings found much that was stimulating in this time when Illinois was beginning rapidly to fill up.”<sup>112</sup> During this period, Lincoln was “sorting out his views about politics, laws and religion – especially religion.”<sup>113</sup>

#### 2.4.4. The early Springfield years

The context for the next 25 years and Lincoln’s surprising path to the Presidency was the City of Springfield, Illinois.<sup>114</sup> In 1837 Springfield was in the process of becoming the new Illinois State Capital.<sup>115</sup> In April, Lincoln rode into Springfield to take advantage of what Thomas described as “a stroke of rare good fortune.”<sup>116</sup> J.T. Stuart<sup>117</sup> had built the largest legal practice in Springfield and Lincoln had secured the position of his junior partner.<sup>118</sup>

Angle furnished a picture of Springfield just two years before Lincoln’s arrival. There were 1500 inhabitants, a developing civic centre and market economy.<sup>119</sup> There was a reasonably vibrant Church community that included a Presbyterian Church, the minister being a graduate of Princeton.<sup>120</sup> The social life of this fast growing city was gaining a reputation for lavish hospitality, and “Its citizens were of excellent class of people.”<sup>121</sup> Having settled in this new environment, Lincoln made an informal headquarters out of Joshua Speed’s<sup>122</sup> general store, where discussion took place on all manner of issues, especially politics and religion.<sup>123</sup> Lincoln’s political career in the State Legislature had begun while resident in New Salem; this was somewhat uneventful, but his two final terms, from 1838 and 1840, were more distinguished and served to “further enhance his confidence and reputation.”<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, 51.

<sup>113</sup> Oates, *Malice Toward None*, 28.

<sup>114</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. [A. Version], 190.

<sup>115</sup> Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*, 55.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>117</sup> John Todd Stuart (1807-1885) had a successful legal practice in Springfield. He served a total of four terms in Congress, two of which were during Lincoln’s Presidency.

<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay>, accessed 24<sup>th</sup> April 2009.

<sup>118</sup> Guelzo, *Redeemer President*, 76.

<sup>119</sup> Paul M. Angle, ‘*Here I Have Lived: A History of Lincoln’s Springfield, 1821-1865*’ (Springfield: Abraham Lincoln Association, 1935), 196.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>121</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 1. 33.

<sup>122</sup> Joshua Fry Speed (1814-1882) was generally considered to be Lincoln’s closest friend, for the remainder of his life. Harold K. Bush, *Lincoln: In His Own Time* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2011).

<sup>123</sup> Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 1. 178.

<sup>124</sup> Carwadine, *Purpose and Power*, 10.

#### **2.4.4.1. Lincoln's Use of the Bible in writing and public remarks**

Lincoln's early years in Springfield were also the first major steps of his political apprenticeship, and therefore yielded an understandably smaller body of material than his Executive years. There are, however, some interesting examples that could possibly be seen as Lincoln's early engagement with the Bible.

##### **2.4.4.1.1. Letters to Miss Owens**

There are two letters written by Lincoln that provide some interesting material, as he settled into Springfield life. Lincoln enjoyed the friendship of Mrs Bennett Able, who reintroduced her sister Mary Owens to him with the intention of Lincoln being viewed as a future husband to Mary, an arrangement to which Lincoln had consented.<sup>125</sup>

The first letter<sup>126</sup> contains a passing comment that describes the reaction of politicians to the attacks of their opponents: "consequently they smile at the angry snarls ... as the Christian does at Satan's rage."<sup>127</sup> Lincoln is not making a religious point; indeed, the context of this portion of his letter is the behaviour of politicians. However, Lincoln's choice of language is of interest because it contains what could be described as an echo of the Bible's teaching on the Christian believers' victorious position in the face of the devil. This is a phrase that Lincoln used in a mildly amusing manner to illustrate a point to a friend. The inspiration for this could easily be a sermon, or even his reading of the Bible itself. There is no way of knowing Lincoln's inner thoughts, and the fact that it is the only potential Biblical echo of the letter would suggest that Hays' contention that the 'volume'<sup>128</sup> is an indication of an echo is not present here. The establishment of Biblical reception or dependence in this instance would be ambiguous in the extreme. The reason for its inclusion is purely in the interest of a thorough investigation of Lincoln's use of language with possible connection to the Bible.

Lincoln composed the second letter on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1837, after his relocation to Springfield.<sup>129</sup> He informed Miss Owens that "This thing of living in Springfield is

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<sup>125</sup> Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 1*. 117.

<sup>126</sup> Lincoln wrote to Mary Owens from Vandalia while the State Legislature was in session on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1836. *Ibid.*, 54-55.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>128</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 30.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

rather a dull business.”<sup>130</sup> He continued in the description of his unhappiness with the remark that “I’ve never been to church yet, nor probably shall not be soon. I stay away because I am conscious I should not know how to behave myself.”<sup>131</sup> Lincoln’s entire experience of church consisted of a frontier congregation and camp revival meetings. It is unlikely that Lincoln had any idea how to behave in a refined church service. When taken at face value, Lincoln’s remark on church attendance to Mary Owens suggests his days of scepticism were coming to an end.

#### **2.4.4.1.2. The Lyceum Address**

On Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January 1838, Lincoln rose to deliver an address to the regular meeting of the Springfield Young Men’s Lyceum. His subject for the evening was “The perpetuation of our political institutions.”<sup>132</sup> The 28-year-old attorney’s first address to the Lyceum would introduce him to a wider audience<sup>133</sup> and fuel considerable interest from future generations of historians. This is widely considered to be Lincoln’s first major speech and, as will be demonstrated, contains some interesting indications of Lincoln’s engagement with the Bible.

One of the main functions of the American Lyceum movement was to provide a forum to sharpen the oratory skills of aspiring young speakers.<sup>134</sup> The concept proved to be a great success at fuelling the passions of America’s emerging young men, and in its first ten years the Lyceum movement expanded to over 3,000 local branches.<sup>135</sup> The Springfield Lyceum held regular meetings at the local Baptist Church.<sup>136</sup> Despite his recognisable qualities, Lincoln created a first impression of being a rather awkward man,<sup>137</sup> and this address provided an opportunity to showcase himself as a serious contender on the larger stage of the Illinois political

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>133</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1*. Location 4113.

<sup>134</sup> Thomas F. Schwartz, “The Springfield Lyceums and Lincoln’s 1838 Speech,” *Illinois Historical Journal*, no. 83 (1990): 45-49; William H. Keith, *Democracy as Discussion: Civic Education and the American Forum Movement* (Kentucky: Lexington Books, 2007), 216.

<sup>135</sup> Holzer, *Lincoln at Cooper Union*, 19.

<sup>136</sup> Morel, *Lincoln’s Sacred Effort*, 126.

<sup>137</sup> Herndon described Lincoln particularly in his youth as unusually ‘tall’ and ‘ungainly.’ Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1*. 67.

establishment.<sup>138</sup> The text of Lincoln's address was published in the Springfield newspaper the *Sangamo Journal*, and as such has been preserved for posterity.<sup>139</sup>

Despite the generally widespread historical interest in this speech, Nicolay and Hay offer no significant commentary. In fact, as late as 1928, Albert Beveridge had to correct their dating of the address.<sup>140</sup> Herndon wrongly records the Address as having taken place "late in 1837."<sup>141</sup> Herndon saw little point in printing the full text of the Address, as he observed that full copies had appeared so often already.<sup>142</sup> Despite the historians' interest in this early speech which Herndon evidenced with his mention of its already wide circulation, he chose not to comment widely on the text. The Address was crafted to satisfy the oratory fashion of the day, tending toward the elaborate; Herndon went so far as to suggest the language was gaudy.<sup>143</sup> In terms of the rhetorical norms of the late 1830s, "the language and mannerisms were conventional."<sup>144</sup> Wilson states that Lincoln prepared the Lyceum address with great care and with his eye towards the aspirations of his future career.<sup>145</sup> It was a carefully crafted speech, designed by Lincoln to take full advantage of this valuable opportunity.<sup>146</sup>

#### **2.4.4.1.2.1. The objectives of the Address**

The Address contained some far-reaching themes. Commentators have put forward possible objectives that may have occupied the mind of the future President as he put pen to paper. The reflections in the Address are remarkable in the light of the events that would transpire during the turbulent years of Lincoln's Presidency. There are two passages that have been identified as somewhat and accidentally prophetic. Lincoln considered the future of the Republic,<sup>147</sup> and his predictions would be dramatically vindicated by the events of the War.

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<sup>138</sup> Wilson, *Honor's Voice*, 196.

<sup>139</sup> Wilson, *Lincoln's Sword*, 27.

<sup>140</sup> Kenneth L. Deutsh and Joseph R. Forniery, eds. *Lincoln's American Dream: Clashing Political Perspectives* (Virginia: Potomac Books, 2005), 162-163.

<sup>141</sup> Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1*. 190.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> Wilson, *Lincoln's Sword*, 27.

<sup>145</sup> Wilson, *Lincoln's Sword*, 27.

<sup>146</sup> Waldo W. Braden, *Abraham Lincoln: Public Speaker* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1988), 51.

<sup>147</sup> "How then shall we perform it? At what point shall we expect the approach of danger? By what means shall we fortify against it? Shall we expect some transatlantic military giant, to step the Ocean, and crush us at a blow? Never! All the armies of Europe, Asia and Africa combined, with all the

#### 2.4.4.1.2.2. The place of the Bible in the Address

Prior to the Address, reports had reached Springfield regarding a number of troubling incidents. Mobs perpetrated a number of atrocities on African Americans and those who supported them. Lincoln was deeply concerned that the Union should be preserved and called for adherence to the national ideals of law and order, in a manner that would elevate good citizenship to a “political religion of the nation.”<sup>148</sup> He was not suggesting a literal worship of the institutions of law and government, but a consecration to freedom and national unity, which was comparable to the individual Christian faith of a large percentage of the populace.

Lincoln addressed the urban disturbances of 1837 and offered a political commentary on this. He continued with both warning and aspiration to not only maintain, but also to advance the work of the Founding Fathers. Lincoln appeals to calculated reason as a defence against the internal destruction of the republic, but Morrel claims, “Lincoln’s call for support from seminaries and pulpits shows that religion has a place in the public square.”<sup>149</sup>

It will be observed in the progress of this thesis that Lincoln placed considerable importance upon the conclusions of his speeches. Indeed, some of Lincoln’s more memorable and often quoted phrases occur in the final sentences of his major political addresses. This early example displays something of a flourish as the Address concluded. The significance of these final words requires full quotation.

Let those materials be moulded into general intelligence, sound morality, and in particular, a reverence for the constitution and laws: and, that we improved to the last; that we remained free to the last; that we revered his name to the last; that, during his long sleep, we permitted no hostile foot to pass over or desecrate his resting place; shall be that which to learn the last

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treasure of the earth (our own excepted) in their military chest; with a Buonaparte for a commander, could not by force, take a drink from the Ohio, or make a track on the Blue Ridge, in a trial of a thousand years. At what point then is the approach of danger to be expected? I answer, if it ever reach us, it must spring up amongst us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen, we must live through all time, or die by suicide.” Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 1.* 109.

<sup>148</sup> Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 1.* 32.

<sup>149</sup> Morel, *Lincoln’s Sacred Effort*, 44. Morel is referring to the following words of Lincoln, in the Address, “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. And, in short, let it become the political religion of the nation.” Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 1.* 112.



trump shall awaken our Washington. Upon these let the proud fabric of freedom rest, as the rock of its basis; and as truly as has been said of the only greater institution, “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”<sup>150</sup>

Lincoln’s intention was to deliver a political point, and yet there are indications of Lincoln engaging with the Bible. In order to state the case that President George Washington’s work and values should never be put aside, he compared the need for this continuity with the need for the perpetuation of the Church, describing it as the “only greater institution” than the republic.

It is possible that Lincoln may have employed a Biblical allusion in this section. Beale states that an allusion requires a unique combination of at least three words to be considered valid.<sup>151</sup> Lincoln employed the phrase “the last trump,” which is an exact representation of 1 Corinthians 15:52: “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” The term ‘trump’ appears again in 1 Thessalonians 4:16. It is interesting to note Purdy’s treatment of W.B. Yeats’ use of Biblical allusion in his poetry. The Irish poet was born one month after Lincoln’s assassination,<sup>152</sup> and also alludes to 1 Corinthians 15:52. Purdy’s assessment is that “The Bible verse served Yeats as it has served for centuries as a sanction for whatever exegesis its exegete want to see.”<sup>153</sup> If Purdy could identify the allusion in Yeats, it may not be unreasonable to do so in Lincoln’s address.

In terms of Beale’s categories, this should be considered a ‘virtually certain’ biblical allusion, because it contains a unique three-word combination and Lincoln uses the terms in a way that is not inconsistent with the original context.<sup>154</sup> The possibility exists that this phrase was in Lincoln’s subconscious thought because he had heard it used in the context of a church sermon, or in another speech that impressed him. However, at this early stage in his development, Lincoln had not been exposed to a wider oratorical experience and it is almost universally accepted that his expansive reading of the Bible had furnished an excellent knowledge of the scriptures. It is not possible to be definitive, but equally neither is it unreasonable to suggest that this is an example of Lincoln using a biblical allusion to aid the presentation of his

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>151</sup> Beale, *Handbook*, Location 767.

<sup>152</sup> Dwight H. Purdy, *Biblical Echo and Allusion in the Poetry of W.B. Yeats* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses Inc., 1994), 2.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>154</sup> Beale, *Handbook*, Location 763.

political message.

The closing lines of the Address contain Lincoln's exhortation to his audience to devote themselves to the values that the victor of the War of Independence and the Republic's first President encapsulated. Lincoln's search for language that would do justice to his sentiment led him to present a quotation from the first book he ever opened, the Bible. The final words of this address are a direct quotation of the final nine words of Matthew 16:18. The issue of identification of direct Biblical quotations has been discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, and it was noted this was the 'strongest possible evidence' of textual dependency.<sup>155</sup> It is important to note that Lincoln's text actually frames these words in quotation marks, which means that the only way for this to be a more conclusive example of direct quotation would be if textual reference were also offered.<sup>156</sup> The reason and motivation for Lincoln's decision to finish this important address with a direct quotation from the Bible are ultimately inconclusive. He is not recorded as furnishing a reason to his associates, and his contemporaries offer no clarification on the matter. A possibility is that his extensive reading of the Bible had drawn Lincoln to the conclusion that it was the most authoritative text available, and his belief in the importance of his subject required citation from this exalted source. In the light of his suggestion that the church was the only institution greater than the Republic, this may not be an unreasonable submission.

Briggs makes reference those contemporary influences that have been mentioned already. He also offers the suggestion that Shakespeare was a probable influence on the direction and tone of Lincoln's Address, claiming "It is *Macbeth*, the play that Lincoln later called his favourite Shakespearean drama, that provides the most powerful setting for the idea Lincoln is trying to project."<sup>157</sup> Briggs is certainly correct in his assertion that Lincoln loved *Macbeth* more than any other work of the Bard.<sup>158</sup> It is a difficult theory to defend with any certainty, because there are no specific quotations or even allusions to Shakespeare's text in the Address. Indeed, Briggs expounds his theory without mentioning the possibility that the Bible at all

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<sup>155</sup> Gregory, *Reception of Luke and Acts*, 6.

<sup>156</sup> Steyn, *Extent and Diversity*, 2.

<sup>157</sup> Briggs, *Lincoln's Speeches*, 49.

<sup>158</sup> Lincoln wrote to Shakespearean actor James Hackett, "Some Shakespeare plays I have never read ... while others I have gone over perhaps as frequently as any unprofessional reader. Among the latter are *Lear*, *Richard Third*, *Henry Eighth*, *Hamlet*, and especially *Macbeth*. I think nothing equals *Macbeth*." Wilson, *Lincoln Before Washington*, 10.

influenced Lincoln, even though there is evidence of direct Biblical quotation. Briggs is not alone in his neglect of Lincoln's possible reliance on the Bible in the construction of the Address. For example, Donald,<sup>159</sup> Guelzo<sup>160</sup> and Miller<sup>161</sup> deal with the Address and to varying extents offer an examination of its content without reference to Lincoln's possible use of the Bible.

#### **2.4.4.1.2.3. Conclusion to the Address**

It is possible to identify allusion and direct quotation of the Bible in Lincoln's first major address. In this early example of Lincoln's political writing, it can be argued that there is evidence of Lincoln's use of the Bible, but it cannot reasonably be submitted that this engagement with the Bible was essential to the success of the text. It could be suggested that his use of the Bible was important, especially the fact that the Address concluded with a direct quotation, but almost certainly it cannot be considered to have been essential.

#### **2.4.4.2. Lincoln's speech on the Sub-Treasury**

On 26<sup>th</sup> December 1839 Lincoln delivered his Speech on the Sub-Treasury at Springfield.<sup>162</sup> The speech, an address of 2,930 words, was an important work for Lincoln. The issue of a national bank as opposed to a sub-treasury scheme was discussed. Lincoln uses his fourteenth paragraph to express the thought that experience is often based not upon what one has known personally, rather than what universal experience claims to be the case.<sup>163</sup> He concludes this point with an illustration of a most universal of all human experience, namely the certainty of death:<sup>164</sup>

We know it, because we know, or at least think we know, that of all the beings, just like ourselves, who have been coming into the world for six

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<sup>159</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 80-94.

<sup>160</sup> Guelzo, *Redeemer President*, Location 1229.

<sup>161</sup> William Lee Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues: An Ethical Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), 130-141.

<sup>162</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1. 159.

<sup>163</sup> "What has once happened will invincibly happen again, when the same circumstances which combined to produce it, shall again combine in the same way." Ibid., 165.

<sup>164</sup> "We feel that we know that a blast of wind would extinguish the flame of the candle that stands by me. How do we know it? We have seen through all our lives, that a blast of wind extinguishes the flame of a candle whenever it is thrown fully upon it." Ibid.

thousand years, not one is now living who was here two hundred years ago.<sup>165</sup>

A literal reading of the Bible offers a calculation of approximately 6,000 years from the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, through to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In consideration of the place of the Bible in Lincoln's political career, it is interesting to note that he apparently had no qualms in referring to the age of mankind as 6,000 years. Lincoln did not have recourse to Darwin's theory of evolution to influence his thinking. Only three years before Lincoln delivered this address, Charles Darwin<sup>166</sup> had arrived back in England having completed his travels aboard *H.M.S. Beagle*. Darwin devoted the next twenty years of his life to the formulation of his theory and eventually published *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* in 1859.<sup>167</sup> The fact that Lincoln made public reference to this dating of humanity is not exceptional and is in fact somewhat reflective of the prevailing views of the day in this matter. It is mentioned in the interests of furnishing a comprehensive treatment of each possible engagement that Lincoln exhibited with the Bible.

The Address continues for a further three paragraphs. Having begun his point with recourse to sound human reason, Lincoln concluded with a reference to the Gospel narrative:

The experience of the whole world, in all by-gone times, proves this true.

The saviour of the world chose twelve disciples, and even one of that small number, selected by superhuman wisdom, turned out a traitor and a devil.

And, it may not be improper here to add, that Judas carried the bag – was the Sub-Treasurer of the Saviour and his disciples.<sup>168</sup>

There is a note of cautious humour, as he constructs a valid point, and then points out in a financial context that the disciple who betrayed Jesus was also a treasurer.<sup>169</sup> Lincoln referred to Judas' betrayal of Jesus, which is an often-stated Gospel theme, in that of the 25 occasions in which the Bible mentions Judas, 21 refer to his betrayal of Jesus.<sup>170</sup> It is also interesting that Lincoln referred to Judas as "a traitor and a

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>166</sup> Charles Robert Darwin (12<sup>th</sup> February 1809 - 19 April 1882) was born the same day as Lincoln.

<sup>167</sup> Peter J. Bowler, *Charles Darwin: The Man and His Influence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>168</sup> Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 1*. 167.

<sup>169</sup> John 12:6 and 13:29 refer to Judas as being the treasurer.

<sup>170</sup> The occasions in which Judas' betrayal are as follows. Matthew 10:4; 26:14, 25, 47; 27:3; 3:19; 14:10 and 43; Luke 6:16; Luke 22:33, 47 and 48; John 6:71; 12:4; 13:2 and 13:26; 18:2, 3 and 5; Act 1:16 and 25.

devil.”<sup>171</sup> This description indicates a possible allusion to the influence of both Luke and John. The particular influence of Luke is that he is the only Evangelist to use both ascriptions for Judas. Lincoln’s use of the term ‘traitor’ is uniquely Luke’s, who introduces him as “Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.”<sup>172</sup> Lincoln’s decision to refer to Judas as a ‘devil’ is further indication of Luke’s possible influence, although Luke employs the designation ‘Satan,’<sup>173</sup> while the actual term ‘devil’ is John’s.<sup>174</sup> It can be argued that in this instance Lincoln demonstrated his grasp of the finer points of the Judas narrative and is able to harmonize both Luke and John’s treatment of Judas.

The name Judas has for centuries been a tainted one, as Paffenroth suggests it belonged to “The most infamous traitor in Western Civilization.”<sup>175</sup> The sentences that Lincoln used to summarise this reference to Judas cannot be described as an allusion in itself, although, as has been suggested, there are allusions contained therein. Lincoln’s treatment of the Judas narrative is characteristic of a paraphrase, which has been briefly defined in Section 1.6.2 of this thesis. Porter further clarifies the function of a biblical paraphrase as that which retells or restates biblical events.<sup>176</sup> In this instance, it would appear that Lincoln is employing paraphrase, using the Judas narrative to illustrate his own point.

The contention of this subsection is that in this speech Lincoln demonstrated a small degree of engagement with the Bible, in the form of a paraphrase of the Gospel narrative on Judas Iscariot. This again cannot be considered as essentially influential to Lincoln’s composition. It is examined in the wider objective of examining all of Lincoln’s use of the Bible, which in the light of his considerable presidential engagement scripture will help to demonstrate that Lincoln did not begin to employ the text of the Bible in the 1860s.

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<sup>171</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1. 167.

<sup>172</sup> Luke 16:16.

<sup>173</sup> “Then entered Satan into Judas.” Luke 22:3.

<sup>174</sup> “The devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot ... to betray him.” John 13:2.

<sup>175</sup> Kim Paffenroth, *Judas: Images of the Lost Disciple* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 132.

<sup>176</sup> Stanley E. Porter, ed. *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 205.

#### 2.4.4.3. Letter to Andrew McCormick

The first supplement of the CW included a Letter to McCormick, which Basler listed as circa January 1841.<sup>177</sup> McCormick was a Whig member of the Illinois State Legislature. Lincoln wrote to him regarding the matter of an unpopular opinion held by both men. Lincoln made this point: “All our friends are ready to cut our throats about it. An angel from Heaven could not make them believe, that we do not arrive at it.”<sup>178</sup> The exact phrase “an angel from heaven” occurs only once in the Bible, which is the occasion cited. Paul warned the Galatians against listening to false preachers who sought to infiltrate the infant church with distortions of the Gospel, which Paul had originally delivered to them:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. Galatians 1:6-7.

In the preceding verse Paul issued a definitive warning: “But even if we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.” Although some wording is very similar, it does not contain the essential elements required to warrant the suggestion of it being a direct quotation. It is at best an indirect allusion to Paul’s language and could be considered a unique combination of more than three words, required by Beale.<sup>179</sup> This also fulfils Leonard’s stipulate of ‘shared language,’ between Lincoln and Paul.<sup>180</sup> It is therefore suggested that Lincoln’s language can be considered as a Biblical allusion.

The context in which Lincoln employs this allusion is also in the area of persuasion; his point is that the intransigence of his opponents would not even be altered by the aforementioned angelic visitation. Paul’s sanction was the suggestion that the most dramatic appeal to change would hypothetically come from ‘an angel from heaven,” which should be ignored if it challenged the gospel. Lincoln required language that spoke of the most dramatic appeal to illustrate the stubbornness of the opposition; he mirrored Paul’s maxim. It is therefore submitted that this is an example of Lincoln employing a ‘probable’<sup>181</sup> allusion from the Bible.

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<sup>177</sup> Basler, *Collected Works, Supplement, 1832-1865*, 10.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> Beale, *Handbook*, Location 767.

<sup>180</sup> Leonard, “Inner-Biblical Allusions,” 242.

<sup>181</sup> Beale, *Handbook*, Location 752.

There is no way of knowing why Lincoln used this allusion. It is feasible that he had heard the phrase used by a variety of different people. However, in the light of his considerable Bible reading, the most probable suggestion is that this was an unconscious appeal to an interesting turn of phrase, which was ingrained upon Lincoln's mind from his constant reading of the Bible. The allusion is not used in any major American political speeches of the period, and therefore it is unlikely that he heard the phrase in the political arena. It is possible that a sermon bore this allusion as a conceptual illustration that amused Lincoln; again, there is no way of substantiation. What can be asserted with reasonable confidence is that this is a strong allusion to a four-word combination of Paul's, and Lincoln's employment is contextually consistent with the original author's intention. It would be unwise to attempt to draw substantial conclusions from Lincoln's use of this biblical allusion. It is included as part of this extensive examination of his use of the Bible in his political writing.

## **2.5. General observations on the period**

Lincoln continued to thrive as Springfield furnished him with opportunities to develop his career. Stuart had given Lincoln an excellent start in legal practice, but Stuart was deeply committed to his own political campaigning. With the help of his junior partner, Stuart was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and served two terms, from 1839-1843.<sup>182</sup> In April 1841 Stuart and Lincoln's legal partnership was amicably dissolved,<sup>183</sup> which allowed Lincoln to enter into what would become a very worthwhile partnership with Stephen Logan.<sup>184</sup>

Lincoln was introduced to Stuart's cousin in December 1839; her name was Mary Ann Todd.<sup>185</sup> Abraham and Mary began their courtship and in late 1840 became engaged.<sup>186</sup> The twenty-one year old Mary was both stylish and attractive, while Lincoln was physically and socially awkward.<sup>187</sup> Lincoln suffered doubts about the relationship; Nicolay and Hay described his condition as "exquisite self-torment."<sup>188</sup> In January 1841, afflicted by a terrible depression, Lincoln broke off the

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<sup>182</sup> [www.bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay](http://www.bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay), accessed 27th May 2009.

<sup>183</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 88.

<sup>184</sup> Stephen Trigg Logan (1800-1880) was a Lawyer who was influential in Lincoln's development as an attorney. Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1*.

<sup>185</sup> Oates, *Malice Toward None*, 53.

<sup>186</sup> Daniel M. Epstein, *The Lincolns: Portrait of a Marriage* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2008), 7.

<sup>187</sup> Epstein, *The Lincolns*, 7-9.

<sup>188</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 2*. 187.

engagement.<sup>189</sup> The invaluable friendship of Speed and the matchmaking of Mrs Francis, wife of the local newspaper editor, reconciled Lincoln and Mary in the summer of 1842. The date for their wedding was set for 4<sup>th</sup> November 1842.<sup>190</sup> The Lincoln's had four sons: Robert, born in 1843,<sup>191</sup> Eddie, born in 1846,<sup>192</sup> Willie, born in 1850 and Thomas, whom Lincoln referred to as Tad, born in 1853. They would experience the tragedy of losing Eddie at four years of age<sup>193</sup> and Willie in 1862.<sup>194</sup>

The Lincoln marriage had much to commend it, but the union was not always harmonious. Mary was given to extremes of emotional expression and could be complex; "When she was in a panic, she could not control her actions."<sup>195</sup> Lincoln was far from being a perfect husband. He was often away on punishing work commitments and, when home, he could be distant and apparently unaffectionate.<sup>196</sup>

In December 1844 Logan and Lincoln dissolved their partnership to allow them both to pursue rather similar political ambitions. Lincoln chose a junior legal partner for himself, William H. Herndon.<sup>197</sup> The firm of Lincoln and Herndon would provide the professional context for the Lincoln narrative until his election to the Presidency.

The next stage in Lincoln's political career would follow the ambition that both he and his wife shared for him, namely the U.S. House of Representatives.<sup>198</sup> The winter of 1845-1846 saw a great deal of political manoeuvring among leading Whig Party members. This culminated in Lincoln being named as the Whig nominee for the Illinois Seventh District, on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1846.<sup>199</sup> On the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1846 Lincoln won what Donald referred to as an "unprecedented majority."<sup>200</sup> Congressman Lincoln and his family left Springfield for Washington DC on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1847.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Oates, *Malice Toward None*, 56.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-62.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>192</sup> Jean H. Baker, *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1987. Reprint, 2008) Kindle edition, Location 2324

<sup>193</sup> Baker, *Mary Todd Lincoln*, Location 2324.

<sup>194</sup> Jerrold M. Packard, *The Lincolns in the White House* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2005), 83.

<sup>195</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 108.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol.1*. 229.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>199</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*. 114.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>201</sup> White, *A. Lincoln*, 139.



## 2.6. Congressman Lincoln

He commenced his new assignment on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> December 1847 and immersed himself in the business of the Thirtieth Congress.<sup>202</sup> Carwardine offers an assessment of Lincoln's Congressional term that is consistent with that of most reliable scholarship: "Rather than being a springboard for achieving a national reputation, proved anticlimactic and largely undistinguished."<sup>203</sup>

### 2.6.1. The Bible in the Congressman's public address

Despite the fact that the congressional term failed to launch Lincoln into a political career of lasting national importance, it would be wrong to dismiss this period as entirely wasted. Lincoln's term of office was ultimately a utilitarian attempt to be a positive influence for the Whig agenda, a role that he actually performed admirably. It was, however, a season that yielded little fruit in terms of either far-reaching or elegiac rhetoric. In the interests of laying a foundation to demonstrate Biblical influence on Lincoln before 1861, there are some noteworthy inclusions for this period.

Notes that Lincoln was preparing for a tariff discussion<sup>204</sup> are collected and dated by Nicolay and Hay as 1<sup>st</sup> December 1847.<sup>205</sup> In this somewhat lengthy collection, Lincoln made the point that "Some have labored, and others have, without labor, enjoyed a large proportion of the fruits. This is wrong."<sup>206</sup> In order to add substance to his argument, Lincoln incorporated a quotation from Genesis 3:19:

In the early days of the world, the almighty said to the first of our race 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread;' and since then, if we accept the light and the air of heaven, no good thing has been, or can be enjoyed by us, without having first cost labour.<sup>207</sup>

It has been observed that Steyn states that the strongest evidence of a direct quotation is that the quote should be defined by introductory formulae.<sup>208</sup> Lincoln not only

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<sup>202</sup> Elihu B. Washburne, "Lincoln in Illinois, Part 1." *The North American Review* 141, no. 347 (1885): 313.

<sup>203</sup> Carwardine, *Purpose and Power*, 11-12.

<sup>204</sup> The "Fragments of a Tariff Discussion." Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. I.* 407-416.

<sup>205</sup> "The date subscribed by Nicolay and Hay has been kept, but it is obvious from Lincoln's own parenthetical note at the end that these 'scraps' were not all written at the same time." *Ibid.*, 407, Footnote 1.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 412.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 411-412.

<sup>208</sup> Steyn, *Extent and Diversity*, 2.

provides an exact quotation, but also the formulae, first identifying the citation as being from the early pages of the Bible, “In the early days of the world,” and also “to the first of our race” in reference to Adam. Secondly, he ascribes these words as belonging to God (“the Almighty said”). Gregory notes this type of direct quotation to be the strongest evidence of an author’s dependence on the cited text. In the progression of this thesis, the case will be presented that Lincoln believed the Bible to be the highest authority of truth available to mankind, and he made careful and measured use of it to reinforce his own political message. He did not do so on every possible occasion, but at important moments in his career he would build upon an argument based on reason and political tradition, with some form of engagement with the Bible. Here is an early example of Lincoln presenting a point and seeking to crown it with recourse to the text of the Bible, with this direct quotation.

A reading of the portion of the CW that covers the Congressional term reveals that Lincoln brought characteristic dexterity and humour into a number of important speeches. On 12<sup>th</sup> January 1848,<sup>209</sup> Lincoln delivered a lengthy speech to the House of Representatives, in which he attacked President Polk’s<sup>210</sup> prosecution of the USA’s war with Mexico.<sup>211</sup> He expressed his belief that the President himself was aware of the injustice of this conflict.<sup>212</sup> Lincoln punctuated his accusation with the following indictment: “He feels the blood of this war, like the blood of Abel, is crying to Heaven against him.”<sup>213</sup> Lincoln’s words are evocative of Genesis 4:10, which records God’s indictment upon Cain for the murder of his brother Abel: “And he said, ‘What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground.’”

The key elements for identifying an authentic biblical paraphrase have been briefly examined in Chapter One of this thesis, in particular Corey’s contention that a

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<sup>209</sup> “Let him answer, fully, fairly, and candidly. Let him answer with facts, and not with arguments. Let him remember he sits where Washington sat, and so remembering, let him answer, as Washington would answer. As a nation should not, and the Almighty will not, be evaded, so let him attempt no evasion – no equivocation.” *Ibid.*, 439.

<sup>210</sup> James Knox Polk (1795-1849) served as the eleventh President of the United States from 1845 to 1849. [www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents](http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents), accessed 12<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

<sup>211</sup> The USA’s war with Mexico extended from 1846-1848. The war fought was over disputed borders between Mexico and Texas, and resulted in a American victory. K. Jack Bauer and R.W. Johannsen, *The Mexican War, 1846-1848* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), xxv & xxvi.

<sup>212</sup> “Then I shall be fully convinced, of what I more than suspect already, that he is deeply conscious of being in the wrong.” Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 1*. 439.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

paraphrase is a “Restatement of a text,”<sup>214</sup> as Nicole also suggests offering the original wording with ‘slight modification’ to suit the readers’ intention.<sup>215</sup> An essential element in the effective use of a paraphrase is Jauss’ requirement that the audience needs to possess a degree of familiarity with the original text. It has already been explained that the religious context of the period strongly suggests that the context of Lincoln’s paraphrase would not have been lost on these Antebellum Congressmen. With the use of a strong Biblical paraphrase, Lincoln had sought to equate the seriousness of Polk’s leadership of the Mexican War with the Bible’s first recorded murder. It will be demonstrated in the progression of this research that this would not be the only occasion that Lincoln would appear to use the Bible to expose the error of his political opponents.

In furtherance of his points, Lincoln expressed his belief that the President had placed his reliance upon the initial patriotic response of the citizenry to a new military adventure.<sup>216</sup> Lincoln reinforced this denunciation with embroidery of what could be considered an allusion to the Genesis narrative of the fall of man.

...that attractive rainbow, that rises in showers of blood – that serpent’s eye, that charms to destroy - he plunged into it, and has swept, on and on, till, disappointed in his calculation of the ease with which Mexico might be subdued, he now finds himself, he knows not where.<sup>217</sup>

Lincoln’s use of the term “that serpent’s eye, that charms to destroy,” would appear to be inspired by Genesis 3:1-6. In these verses the serpent deceived Eve into eating the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The language is entirely Lincoln’s; the Bible does not use the word ‘charm’ in connection to the Serpent. In reading the Genesis account there should be little question that the serpent employed charm in his assault on Eve’s innocence. Indeed Genesis 3:1 declares the serpent to be “more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord had made.” Although Lincoln drastically altered the language, there appears to be a strong allusion to the theme and detail of the Genesis narrative. The challenge of identification of Biblical allusions has already been examined, but a restatement of Tate will be prudent. He states that an allusion “makes reference to or attempts to

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<sup>214</sup> Corley, Lemke and Lovejoy, eds. *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 461.

<sup>215</sup> Nicole, “New Testament Use,” 146.

<sup>216</sup> “Trusting to escape scrutiny, by fixing the public gaze upon the exceeding brightnesses of military glory.” Basler, *Collected Works. Vol. 1.* 439.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 439-440.

conjure up in the memory of the reader a historical or literary event.”<sup>218</sup> The question arises as to whether Lincoln was deliberately evoking the Bible, or simply employing a well-known thought that he might have heard elsewhere. It is impossible to be definitive in these matters; however, the fact that Lincoln had already employed this Genesis narrative in his rhetoric furnishes some credence to the submission that Lincoln is employing an allusion to the serpent’s interaction with Eve.

Lincoln had therefore seemed to move the biblical comparison backwards, in terms of the flow of the Genesis narrative. Polk was compared with Eve, who was deceived by the Serpent. In what amounted to 109 words, Lincoln had employed a paraphrase and an allusion from the fourth and third chapters of Genesis, in an attempt to implicate Polk as both a murderer and hapless victim beguiled and now confused. It is not unreasonable to suggest that there is a case for claiming that Lincoln’s engagement with the Genesis material demonstrated a measure of dexterous skill in using the Bible in this political speech. This speech was well received by the print media; for example, *The Missouri Republican* reported the Address thus:

His speech was one of great power, and replete with the strongest and most conclusive arguments. He commanded the attention of the House, which none but a strong man can do.<sup>219</sup>

This early Congressional performance was not typical. In preserved records of Lincoln’s oration or correspondence there are no other noteworthy occasions in which the scripture is engaged to such effect. There were references to religion<sup>220</sup> and the name of God<sup>221</sup> was evoked, but there is no deliberate or substantial example of Lincoln’s reception of the Bible.

In the autumn of 1848 Lincoln was assigned to speak for the Whig Party on a brief tour of New England, which provided Lincoln an opportunity to visit Niagara Falls.<sup>222</sup> The experience of this natural wonder made an impact on Lincoln, to the extent that he composed a reflection entitled “Fragment: Niagara Falls.”<sup>223</sup> It is important to contextualize Lincoln’s reflections before examining his possible Biblical inferences.

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<sup>218</sup> Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, Location 1732.

<sup>219</sup> Herbert Mitgang, ed. *Abraham Lincoln: A Press Portrait* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 55.

<sup>220</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1. 473; 508.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 477.

<sup>222</sup> Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln*, 102.

<sup>223</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 10-11.

Herndon had previously visited Niagara Falls and the experience had a profound effect upon him. Upon his return to Springfield, he went to great lengths to communicate his experience to Lincoln: “The recollection of the gigantic and awe-inspiring scene stimulated my exuberant powers.”<sup>224</sup> Herndon was struck by Lincoln’s answer to his question: “What made the deepest impression on you when you stood in the presence of the great natural wonder?”<sup>225</sup> Lincoln replied: “The thing that struck me most forcibly when I saw the falls ... was, where in the world did all that water come from?”<sup>226</sup> Herndon remarked that the answer was typical of Lincoln, who would always go to the practical heart of an issue; Lincoln was “heedless of beauty or awe.”<sup>227</sup> Herndon’s recollection and assessment are borne out by Lincoln’s own writing on Niagara Falls.<sup>228</sup>

The value of this interaction is the observation that although Lincoln was moved, he remained entirely practical in his reflection. In that frame of mind, he composed his description of the Falls and added a concluding paragraph detailing another aspect that arrested him, namely the fact that the scene was so ancient, “It calls up the indefinite past.”<sup>229</sup> Lincoln reflected that while all the major dramas of human history were being rehearsed, Niagara continued.<sup>230</sup> To illustrate the profundity of this, Lincoln recalled five events of history, whose inclusion suggests, were matters of priority in his perception of historical memory.

Lincoln mentioned two events that belong to secular documentation. His ambitions and affections are reflected in his first choice, which was the discovery of America by Columbus.<sup>231</sup> The second referred to the existence of dinosaurs.<sup>232</sup> He proceeds to mention three Biblical events. The first was Christ’s crucifixion, secondly the passing of the Children of Israel through the Red Sea and thirdly the creation of

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<sup>224</sup> Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 1. 367.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> “Niagara Falls is only the lip of the basin out of which pours all the surplus water which rains down on two or three hundred thousand square miles of the earth’s surface ... five hundred thousand [to] ns of water, falls with it’s full weight, a distance of a hundred feet each minute – thus exerting a force equal to the lifting of the same weight, through the same space, in the same time.” Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 10.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> “In that long – long time, never still for a single moment. Never dried, never froze, never slept, never rested.” Ibid., 11.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>232</sup> “The eyes of that species of extinct giants ... the Mammoth and Mastadon – now so long dead, that fragments of their monstrous bones, alone testify, that they ever lived, have gazed on Niagara.” Ibid., 10-11.

Adam. The interest for this thesis of these inclusions pertains to the influence of the Bible on the practical, not just spiritual thinking of Lincoln. His inclusion of these events amongst secular events could possibly suggest that Lincoln considered Biblical events to be historically accurate. In this instance he reflected upon the scale of what he saw at Niagara in the light of some of the most important moments in human history, as recorded in the Bible.

The nature of Lincoln's words indicates his employment of an allusion as this particular method of reception. The exact wording of his remark about Jesus is rendered: "When Christ suffered on the Cross."<sup>233</sup> It is interesting that Lincoln did not say 'Christ died on the Cross,' but he employed the word 'suffered.' The gospel narratives furnish varying descriptions of the physical, psychological and spiritual anguish that Christ indeed suffered on the cross. The concept that Christ 'suffered' is a theme of Peter's that was employed as part of the kerygma in which Peter does not develop a detailed investigation of the passion, rather his statement is intended to declare the significance of Christ's sufferings.<sup>234</sup> Christ's suffering is also presented. Dryden submits that when Peter spoke of Christ's suffering his thinking encompasses the 'entirety of the passion' including both suffering and death.<sup>235</sup> Lincoln's reflection on Niagara was not intended for publication or public consumption. It will be seen that Lincoln used writing to reflect and this is an early example of such. Lincoln's inclusion of Christ's sufferings is merely to provide context to the prehistoric nature of Niagara, and should be considered as exactly this. However Lincoln's use of language may provide something of a glimpse into his understanding of the New Testament's teaching on the suffering of Christ. In Lincoln's mind was installed the thought that Christ was not simply executed, he 'suffered' with all the theological implication represented therein. Lincoln's choice of language could easily be that which was absorbed from the preaching he experienced, the hymns he sang, or a subconscious thought instilled by years of his considerable Bible reading. It could also be a random choice of language that contains no indication of Lincoln's understanding of Christ's vicarious suffering.

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>234</sup> Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 208

<sup>235</sup> J. De Waal Dryden, *Theology and Ethics in 1 Peter* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 185.

The object of this research is to assess not only the importance of the Bible as an influence upon Lincoln's political compositions, but also to seek to answer the question as to whether it was essential to the success of his political career. It stands as fact that Lincoln used the Bible dramatically less in his Congressional term than was the case during his Presidential tenure. The examination of this period is of value in establishing a wider awareness that although it was between 1859 and 1865 that would see Lincoln's most influential engagement with the Bible, it was by no means a feature confined to his latter career. Lincoln did not seek a second term in Congress and returned to Springfield. Burlingame sets the tone for the next period of Lincoln's journey,

Five years would pass before he again sought public office. During that political hiatus Lincoln underwent a painful introspective ordeal from which he emerged a different man. At the age of 40, he was an accomplished partisan politician of limited scope, by the time he was 45 years old, he had somehow transformed into the statesman that the world would come to revere.<sup>236</sup>

## **2.7. The wilderness years and the race for the Senate**

Lincoln used the years between 1849 and 1854 to devote himself to his legal practice. Lincoln continued to develop intellectually and in his public speaking. He travelled on the Illinois legal circuit and continued to increase his circle of contacts and supporters. Although Lincoln's political activities were minimal, this became a time of preparation for the unforeseen events of the 1860 Presidential Election.

### **2.7.1. General observations on the period**

Lincoln had hoped to leave Congress and secure the position of Commissioner of the General Land Office in Washington.<sup>237</sup> Instead, political wrangling left Lincoln with the disappointing offer of Secretary of the Territory of Oregon, which he declined.<sup>238</sup> It is not too simplistic to conclude that Lincoln would spend the years 1850 to 1854 in something of a political wilderness of his own choosing. He resumed his legal activities in partnership with Herndon, and made various political cameo appearances

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<sup>236</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1.* 307-308.

<sup>237</sup> Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln*, 104.

<sup>238</sup> Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 2.* 61.

when called upon to exercise his evolving rhetorical prowess. His political passion began to stir at the passing of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which will be briefly discussed in section 2.7 of this thesis.

In 1854 Lincoln was overwhelmingly elected to the Illinois State Legislature; however, he soon discovered that this new status would prevent him from being elected to the US Senate.<sup>239</sup> On 25<sup>th</sup> November Lincoln declined to accept his seat in the Legislature.<sup>240</sup> It is important to note that there was a considerable difference between a modern Senatorial Election and the contests of the 1850s. Modern Senatorial contests are settled by popular election.<sup>241</sup> During the Antebellum, seats in the Senate were not directly decided by popular vote, and a ballot of the State Legislature was responsible for electing someone to the Senate.<sup>242</sup> On 8<sup>th</sup> February 1855 voting began in the State Legislature. Lincoln led during the first few ballots, but after some political gymnastics the tenth ballot elected Lyman Trumbull to the Senate.<sup>243</sup> This defeat deeply affected Lincoln. Washburne recalled that no other event had thus far “brought to him so much disappointment and chagrin as his defeat for United States Senate in 1855.”<sup>244</sup>

Despite Lincoln’s initial disappointment, he soon realised that the political landscape of the day meant that Senator Stephen Douglas<sup>245</sup> had also suffered as a result of Trumbull’s victory; “His defeat now gives me more pleasure than my own gives me pain,” he told Washburne.<sup>246</sup> This disappointment did not curb Lincoln’s passion to oppose and attack the new political dogmas of the Democratic Party, and especially that of Illinois’ celebrated son, Douglas. The remaining half of the decade would see Lincoln continue his legal partnership with Herndon, while becoming ever more prominently involved in politics.

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<sup>239</sup> White, *Lincoln*, Location 3643.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> “The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, elected by the people thereof, for six years.” Trent Lott, Chairman. *Senate Election Law Guide Book 2006* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006), 9.

<sup>242</sup> Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*, 192.

<sup>243</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, Locations 11526-11556.

<sup>244</sup> Washburne, “Lincoln in Illinois,” 316.

<sup>245</sup> Stephen Arnold Douglas (1813–1861) was a lawyer who rose to become a Judge of the State Supreme Court. From 1847 until his death he served in the US Senator. Known as ‘the little giant’ Douglas was one of the most important, vocal and prominent political figures of the antebellum. <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay>, accessed 4th October 2009.

<sup>246</sup> White, *Lincoln*, Location 3703.



## 2.8. The Peoria Address

In the third millennium's first multivolume biography of Lincoln, Burlingame devotes thirteen to Lincoln's efforts at Peoria. He entitled his coverage "The first great speech."<sup>247</sup> His choice of title may be less than munificent towards Lincoln's Lyceum address of 1838, but it is illustrative of the perceived scholastic importance of the Address. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1854, Douglas delivered a speech in the Springfield Hall of Representatives. Lincoln proceeded to answer this speech<sup>248</sup> at 2.00 pm on the following day.<sup>249</sup> Twelve days hence in Peoria, Douglas delivered an afternoon address to which Lincoln furnished an evening reply. Fornieri submits his contention that Lincoln's Peoria address was "among his greatest."<sup>250</sup>

### 2.8.1. Background and context of the Peoria Address

To understand the significance and place of this address in the collection of Lincoln's important speeches, some background to the geographical and political context is required.

#### 2.8.1.1. The city of Peoria

Peoria provided Antebellum America with a testing ground for plays and musical in the vaudeville tradition.<sup>251</sup> If a play did not succeed in Peoria, it was "either rewritten or cancelled."<sup>252</sup> The perception of Peoria as a representative segment of the emerging Western American middle class extended into political thinking, resulting in the city being considered something of a barometer of public opinion. The importance of making an impression with a political speech in Peoria was therefore significant for Lincoln.

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<sup>247</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 1. 376.

<sup>248</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 240-247. The recording of Lincoln's Springfield speech is not a full text of the address. Footnote 1 on Page 240 describes this entry as a 'summary' reprinted from the Illinois Journal, 5<sup>th</sup> October 1854. The Journal reported the speech to have lasted for "above three hours."

<sup>249</sup> White, *Lincoln*, 198-199.

<sup>250</sup> Fornieri, J.R. *The Language of Liberty: The Political Speeches and Writings of Abraham Lincoln* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing Inc., 2003), 151.

<sup>251</sup> *Vaudeville Old and New: An Encyclopaedia of Variety Performers in America*, Vol. 1. (New York: Routledge, 2006); Stephanie E. McCarthy, *Haunted Peoria* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 1998), 13.

<sup>252</sup> McCarthy, *Haunted Peoria*, 13.

### 2.8.1.2. The political context

The political context for the Address was almost entirely shaped by The Missouri Compromise, which was passed by the House of Representatives in 1820. This legislation admitted the territories of Maine and Missouri as States of the Union. The ‘compromise was that Maine be admitted as a ‘free state,’ with Missouri as a ‘slave state.’<sup>253</sup> This piece of legislation was an attempt to maintain some harmony in Congress between slave and Free States.<sup>254</sup> The Compromise also served to prohibit slavery in the territories north of 36° 30’,<sup>255</sup> which basically refers to what would become the remainder of northern continental United States as it exists at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Lincoln had been opposed to chattel slavery all his life.<sup>256</sup> He did not always align himself with the strong abolitionist lobby of the late Antebellum, favouring what he considered a more realistic approach, as Drake suggests: “Though Lincoln’s feelings about what he called ‘the monstrous injustice of slavery’ were sincere, he was no abolitionist, and he felt bound to accept slavery where it existed.”<sup>257</sup> This involved the restriction of the extension of slavery as prescribed by the Missouri Compromise.<sup>258</sup> Lincoln’s expressed expectation was that if slavery could be contained within the existing slave states, it would eventually die of natural causes.<sup>259</sup>

The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in May 1854<sup>260</sup> had a profound effect on Lincoln and indeed served to resurrect his political interest. The Kansas-Nebraska Act promoted an involved political debate. The result was that the Missouri Compromise was rendered effectively void, potentially encouraging the renewed extension of slavery.<sup>261</sup> Douglas proposed a bill to organise Nebraska into a

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<sup>253</sup> <http://www.loc.gov/tr/program/bib/ourdocs/Missouri.html>, accessed 1st October 2009.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> “I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I can not remember a time when I did not so think, and feel.” Lincoln in a letter to Albert G. Hodges; 4<sup>th</sup> April 1864. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7. 281.

<sup>257</sup> R. Drake, “The Law That Ripped America in Two.” *Lincoln, America’s Greatest President at 200: Smithsonian Collector’s Edition* (2009): 11.

<sup>258</sup> Robert P. Forbes, *Missouri Compromise and its Aftermath: Slavery and the Meaning of America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 284.

<sup>259</sup> Lincoln expressed his views on the containment of chattel slavery in his debate with Senator Douglas, at Charleston, Illinois on 18<sup>th</sup> September 1858. “There is no way of putting an end to the slavery agitation amongst us [...] but to keep out of our new Territories – to restrict it forever to the old States where it now exists. The public mind will rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction.” Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3. 181.

<sup>260</sup> Oates, *Malice Toward None*, 107.

<sup>261</sup> James M. McPherson, *Drawn with the sword: Reflections on the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 1996), 121.

United States Territory. During the mid 1850s, Lincoln developed his ideas on effective opposition to Douglas' political doctrine known as 'popular sovereignty.'<sup>262</sup> White makes the point that Lincoln rose from rather doomed opposition to providing a patriotic alternative to the Douglas prescription: "He began to distinguish himself from his peers with his ability to offer affirmation – of the old Declaration of Independence and of a new vision for America."<sup>263</sup> Lincoln set about vigorously opposing Douglas' position at every opportunity.

### **2.8.1.3. Lincoln's rivalry with Douglas**

It is important to mention the now famous rivalry between Lincoln and Douglas. Lincoln had known Douglas for the entire period of his residence in Springfield. Lincoln would spend most of this time in the shadow of Douglas' more obvious success.<sup>264</sup> Douglas was similar to Lincoln in that he was ambitious, hard working, and possessed of obvious natural intelligence. The difference came in the speed and scale of their respective success, with Douglas reaching legal and national prominence, while Lincoln experienced more localised success. The political rivalry between these two worthy adversaries was not only founded in deeply divided political philosophy; for Lincoln, at least, it had become deeply personal. Indeed the rivalry with Douglas over the Kansas-Nebraska Act was to become the midwife of Lincoln's political rebirth: "Had it not been for Douglas, Lincoln would have remained merely a good trial lawyer in Springfield."<sup>265</sup>

### **2.8.2.1. The percentage of Biblical content**

This Address is a lengthy work that required in excess of three hours for delivery.<sup>266</sup> It was a planned reply to a speech from Douglas, who by prior agreement was permitted

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<sup>262</sup> "Popular sovereignty meant that the territories, as territories, could establish or exclude slavery according to the desires of the local population ... this power over slavery could be exercised by the territorial legislatures." Robert W. Johansen, *The Frontier, The Union, and Stephen A. Douglas* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 193.

<sup>263</sup> White, *Lincoln*, 221.

<sup>264</sup> "Twenty-two years ago Judge Douglas and I first became acquainted. We were both young then ... Even then we were both ambitious; I, perhaps, quite as much so as he. With me, the race of ambition has been a failure – a flat failure; with him it has been one of splendid success. His name fills the nation; and is not unknown, even, in foreign lands. I affect no contempt for the high eminence he has reached. So reached, that the oppressed of my species, might have shared with me in the elevation, I would rather stand on that eminence, than wear the richest crown that ever pressed a monarch's brow." Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 382-383.

<sup>265</sup> Morris, *The Long Pursuit*, xi.

<sup>266</sup> Josiah G. Holland, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (Springfield: Gurdon Bill, 1866), 139.

a rejoinder.<sup>267</sup> The format would prove to be something of a preview of the Lincoln-Douglas debates that preceded the 1858 Senatorial election.<sup>268</sup> In the context of seeking to understand the place of the Bible in Lincoln's political compositions, the Address is important because at a pivotal moment in Lincoln's public life it is generally considered to be a "Turning Point."<sup>269</sup> It is also important to note that the Address impressed the audience in Peoria. The following is representative of Lincoln's favourable newspaper coverage: "His eloquence greatly impressed all his hearers."<sup>270</sup>

The Address marked a maturing of Lincoln's oratory, as Burlingame notes in his quotation of Beverage, who considered it to be

Wholly unlike any before made by him. Indeed, if it and his public utterances thereafter were placed side by side with his previous (pre-1854) speeches, and the authorship of them all were unknown, it would appear impossible that they had been written by the same man.<sup>271</sup>

Without the modern historians' benefit of hindsight, Herndon simply described the address as "an effective speech."<sup>272</sup>

The Address contains little reference to the Bible in comparison to the capacious nature of the text. There is indication that Lincoln possibly engaged with the Bible in only 138 of his 16,670<sup>273</sup> carefully chosen words. However, the assessment of influence and the importance of wording in the text of a speech have rarely been dependent upon the percentage it occupies of the Address. A modern example of this is found in the 1963 speech delivered by the Reverend Martin Luther King Junior. King's address has become universally known as the 'I have a dream' speech, with the famous phrase occurring nine times in a text of 1,651 words.<sup>274</sup> The percentage of the speech occupied by the words "I have a dream" is hardly

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<sup>267</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 247-248.

<sup>268</sup> The 'Lincoln-Douglas Debates' will be more fully referred to and examined in as much as they relate to the place of the Bible in the career of Lincoln in Section 4.2.1 of this thesis.

<sup>269</sup> Lewis E. Lehrman, *Lincoln at Peoria: The Turning Point* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole, 2008), i.

<sup>270</sup> Mario M. Cuomo, and Harold Holzer, *Lincoln on Democracy: His Own Words with Essays by America's Foremost Civil War Historians* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 65.

<sup>271</sup> Burlingame, *Inner World*, 1.

<sup>272</sup> Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 2. 373.

<sup>273</sup> The stated word count does not include the wording of the editor's text or indeed Lincoln's own remarks in which he suggested and adjournment until 7pm. The word count includes only the words recorded in the *Collected Works* after 7pm on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1854. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 249-284.

<sup>274</sup> The word count for the "I have a dream" speech is taken from the text of Dr King's address, as recorded on [www.usconstitution.net/dream.html](http://www.usconstitution.net/dream.html), accessed 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010.

considerable, and yet the phrase captured the popular imagination and seemed to encapsulate the essence of King's message. It is noteworthy that the phrase "let freedom reign"<sup>275</sup> also occurs nine times towards the end of King's address, and yet it continues to be known as the 'I have a dream' speech.

Fornieri suggests the sources of inspiration that became the foundation of Lincoln's argument, listing them in the following order as "Constitutional, Biblical, legal and republican sources."<sup>276</sup> Despite the comparatively tiny amount of words that could possibly be considered as relating to the Bible, Fornieri still lists the Bible's influence as being second only to the Constitution.

### **2.8.2.2. The Bible and political logic in the Peoria Address**

The use of the Bible in Lincoln's manuscripts is usually considered pointed and calculated to have the maximum impact. Lincoln had made his arguments at Springfield, twelve days before his Peoria appearance, and yet the *Illinois Journal* only printed a considerably contracted summary. On this occasion Lincoln made sure he would be precisely and fully quoted, as Herndon recalled: "Lincoln made an effective speech, which he wrote out and furnished to the Sangamon Journal for publication."<sup>277</sup>

The audience at Peoria listened to 12681 words of the speech before Lincoln engaged them with the Bible.<sup>278</sup> The introduction of the Biblical text was entirely in keeping with the direction that Lincoln was to employ. He stated his objection to the Kansas-Nebraska Act on the grounds that the position of tolerance towards slavery, as a somewhat doomed southern institution, was now being shifted: "I object to it because it assumes that there CAN be MORAL RIGHT<sup>279</sup> in the enslaving of one man by another."<sup>280</sup> Lincoln presented a succinct history of the limitation of slavery by the government,<sup>281</sup> in which the following conclusion was drawn in reference to the attitude of the founders: "Thus we see, the plain unmistakable spirit of that age,

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Fornieri, *Language of Liberty*, 151.

<sup>277</sup> Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 2*. 373.

<sup>278</sup> Word count derived from the actual content in the CW. The count excludes 228 words that comprise editorial explanation and Lincoln's words, which suggested an early evening recess. Basler, *Collected Works, Vol.2*. 247-275.

<sup>279</sup> The use of capital letters in this sentence is a duplication of Lincoln's inflections, which are recorded as capitals in the *Collected Works*. Ibid., 274.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid., 274-275.

towards slavery, was hostility to the PRINCIPLE,<sup>282</sup> and toleration, ONLY BY NECESSITY.”<sup>283</sup> Lincoln considered that Douglas’ legislation had sought to elevate the owning of slaves from an allowance into a “sacred right.”<sup>284</sup>

In 2007, a series of lectures that had been delivered to the Lincoln Forum between 2003 and 2005 were published. Fornieri’s contribution was a paper on the Peoria Address. He asserted that despite universal scholarly acknowledgement of the speech’s greatness, to date there had been “...no comprehensive treatment”<sup>285</sup> of Lincoln’s Address. Fornieri’s contention was that Lincoln had constructed a case based upon moral justification that derived from “...the moral and religious teaching of the Bible with the Founder’s republicanism.”<sup>286</sup> It is noteworthy that, despite the small percentage of Biblical content in the Address, Fornieri asserted that it was “exemplary of Lincoln’s integration of religion and politics.”<sup>287</sup> He sought to explain Lincoln’s quest to do what is right: “This standard was calibrated by God’s moral universe, promulgated by the declaration, and known through the cooperation of both reason and divine revelation in the Bible.”<sup>288</sup> The practice that Fornieri identified represented a method that would become an increasingly recognisable feature of Lincoln’s compositions, namely his reliance on a symbiosis between reason and the Bible.

Lincoln’s capacity to captivate and impress even undecided audiences was in large part attributable to his careful efforts with the Bible. Fornieri noticed a gap in the treatment of some important scholars regarding the Address’ use of the Bible, when he composed his lecture. Indeed an attempt to span this gap in scholarship was presented by Lehrman in his 2008 contribution.<sup>289</sup> In the introduction to his book, Lehrman concurs with Fornieri’s assessment of historians’ treatment of the Address.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> See remarks in previous footnote on the use of capitals in the CW.

<sup>283</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 275.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> Joseph R. Fornieri, “Lincoln’s Political Faith;” Simon, Holzer, and Vogel, *Lincoln Revisited*, 1.

<sup>286</sup> Fornieri, in Simon, Holzer and Vogel, *Lincoln Revisited*, 1.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>289</sup> Lehrman, *Lincoln at Peoria*.

<sup>290</sup> “Less well-known are the speeches given at Springfield and Peoria two weeks apart in 1854. They mark Lincoln’s re-entry into the politics of Illinois and, his preparation for the presidency in 1861. Historians and biographers have noted their importance, but they have not received the full study they merit.” [www.lincolnatpeoria.com](http://www.lincolnatpeoria.com), accessed 1st April 2010.

It is also the case that the considerable body of modern treatment of Lincoln has sought to answer questions that are both obvious and obscure. The intention and scope of the various contributions to Lincoln scholarship have not allowed for, or inspired, the extent to which Lincoln appeared to have relied upon the text and message of the Bible. Indeed there is almost no evaluation of the importance, or otherwise, of the Bible in Lincoln's major compositions. Fornieri's reputation and his inclusion in this august body of papers require his opinion to be treated as expert at the highest level. He contends that the Address is a classic example of the way in which Lincoln's political thought, and the public presentation of such, was formulated. He spoke of Lincoln's three 'R's,' namely "reason, revelation and republicanism."<sup>291</sup> Indeed, by way of clarification, Fornieri presented his contention thus:

I contend further that Lincoln's political faith was constituted by *the mutual influence and the philosophical harmony* between these traditions. For Lincoln, the moral precepts of God's revelation in the Bible were confirmed by natural, unassisted reason, and vice versa. The teachings of the Bible were made publically authoritative through the common language of reason.<sup>292</sup>

If Fornieri's contention is correct, then the Bible in the Address, as will be demonstrated in examination of Lincoln's subsequent political career, was not simply illustrative or supplementary, but formed an essential substratum for Lincoln's contribution to American history. The tools of reason and the foundation of the American Republic were not enough for Lincoln; he required the Bible's teaching and wisdom to create more solid positions. It is a fact that Lincoln's appearance and the tone of his voice did not instantly endear him to his audiences, both locally and nationally. Burlingame records journalist Horace White's recollections:

Mr Lincoln was in his shirt sleeves ... Although 'awkward, he was not in the least embarrassed...Lincoln's 'thin, high-pitched falsetto voice of much carrying power... He presented 'not a graceful figure, yet not an ungraceful one:' a 'tall, angular form with the long, angular arms... the mobile face wet with perspiration which he discharged in drops as he threw his head this way and that.'<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Fornieri in Simon, Holzer and Vogel, *Lincoln Revisited*, 5.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1*. 387.

### 2.8.2.3. Consideration of Lincoln's use of the Bible

The Peoria Address is a major text in size, substance and importance. It also contains evidence of Lincoln's use of the Bible. Lincoln's style of speechwriting in the 1850s is recognised by Howe as being forensic:

His legal training led him directly into it. The preliminary review of history to establish precedents and trends, the call to resist the adversary, the use of interrogatories and summations, are all typical of Lincoln's forensic oratory. Some of his speeches, such as the Springfield-Peoria address of 1854 are classics of this genre.<sup>294</sup>

#### 2.8.2.3.1. Sufficient unto the day

Lincoln explained his thinking by expressing his support for the original Missouri Compromise. He did not call for any new concessions,<sup>295</sup> he simply expected the original Compromise to be a permanent feature of American expansion.<sup>296</sup> His attitude to the potential for problems with new territorial acquisitions was that each new territory would be dealt with as the occasion arose, "we will, as heretofore, try to manage them somehow."<sup>297</sup> Lincoln punctuated this with a quotation from Christ's Sermon on the Mount:

As to Nebraska, I regarded its character as being fixed, by the Missouri compromise, for thirty years---as unalterably fixed as that of my own home in Illinois. As to new acquisitions I said "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."<sup>298</sup>

Lincoln's final eight words are a direct quotation of Matthew 6:34: "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."<sup>299</sup> The presence of quotation marks distinguishes this as a direct quotation. The quotation is the conclusion of Jesus' own remarks on the folly of worry in Matthew 6:34, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the

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<sup>294</sup> Daniel W. Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 284.

<sup>295</sup> "I mean not to ask a repeal, or modification of the fugitive slave law. I meant not to ask for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. I meant not to resist the admission of Utah and New Mexico, even should they ask to come in as slave states." Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 2*. 261.

<sup>296</sup> "I understood, we then had no territory whose character as to slavery was not already settled. As to Nebraska, I regarded its character as being fixed by the Missouri Compromise, for thirty years---as unalterably fixed as that of my own home in Illinois." *Ibid.*

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

<sup>299</sup> Matthew 6:34.



morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” The thought is a simple one that Lincoln employs on a basic level, considering that the issues at hand are troubling but would be better handled as they occurred.

#### **2.8.2.3.2. God and Mammon**

Lincoln made the point that slavery was tolerated by the Founding Fathers rather than embraced: “They hedged and hemmed it in to the narrowest limits of necessity.”<sup>300</sup> He then cited six dates when legislation sought to further contain the activities of slavery and concluded that “the plain unmistakable spirit of that age, towards slavery, was hostility to the PRINCIPLE, and toleration, ONLY BY NECESSITY.”<sup>301</sup> Lincoln was somewhat surprised that since the adoption of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, slavery was immediately “transformed into a ‘sacred right.’”<sup>302</sup> He compared this new ‘sacred right’ with the founding words of the Republic itself to the effect that “all men are created equal.” This point was central to the argument that Lincoln would propagate for the remainder of his life, that the right of each State to choose to adopt slavery was inconsistent with the Declaration of Independence.

Lincoln stated, “These principles can not stand together. They are as opposite as God and mammon; and whoever holds to the one, must despise the other.”<sup>303</sup> These words bear striking similarity to those of Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13, who record these words of Christ with only slight variation. The Matthean rendering:

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

The Lukan begins with “No servant can serve two masters,” and completes with an identical wording to Matthew’s. The similarity of language between the Gospels and Lincoln cannot constitute a quotation, but does fulfil the scholarly definitions for a paraphrase as explained in Chapter One of this thesis. In particular, Nicole’s observation that a paraphrase would consist of ‘slight modification’ from the original is consistent with Lincoln’s practice in this instance.<sup>304</sup> Leonard states that shared

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<sup>300</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 274.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>304</sup> Nicole, “New Testament Use,” 146.

phrases provide a more compelling case for a paraphrase being dependent on the Biblical text.<sup>305</sup> Lincoln's use of "whoever holds to the one, must despise the other," is strongly comparable to the Gospel's "or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other." Lincoln altered the language slightly to suit the structure of his address, and he employs a different context to the original. The contexts of Christ's remarks are different in Matthew and Luke. Matthew records the statement as part of the Sermon on the Mount, while Luke's forms part of the application following the parable of the Unjust Steward. Jeremias suggests that, despite these contextual differences, the application of both Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13 is the same. He states that there is a sharp contrast between the service of God and mammon, which is accompanied by a call for a "decision between the two."<sup>306</sup> Terry also considers this to be the case:

Two masters, so opposite in nature as God and mammon, cannot be loved and served at one and the same time. The love of the one necessarily excludes the love of the other, and neither will be served by a divided heart.<sup>307</sup>

Lincoln's intention was to highlight not simply the difference between Douglas' position and the Declaration of Independence; he was attempting to prove incompatibility. In order to state this in the strongest terms available, Lincoln makes recourse to the Bible. The possibility that Lincoln was quoting a popular phrase, or even the received wisdom of another orator, becomes unlikely in this instance, due to the length and accuracy of the paraphrase. If Lincoln had submitted the phrase 'God and mammon' alone, then the task of source identification would become more complicated. However, Lincoln's paraphrase of the entire tenor of Christ's remark would indicate a stronger case for the contention that Lincoln was influenced by the biblical text itself. This point is made, as always, with reference to the fact that Lincoln is universally accepted to have been a prolific reader of the Bible.

It is impossible to offer a definitive commentary on Lincoln's intentions and thoughts as he engaged with the Bible. What is accepted amongst the vast majority of Lincoln historians is his uncommon knowledge of the scriptures. It is reasonable to suggest that Lincoln was familiar with the content of the Sermon on the Mount. Reference will be made during this thesis to the almost universally considered view that Lincoln's audiences had largely grown up in the context of a protestant Christian

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<sup>305</sup> Leonard, "Inner-Biblical Allusions," 252.

<sup>306</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *Rediscovering the Parables* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1966), 36.

<sup>307</sup> Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments* (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1890), 123.

experience. Carwardine submits that “Evangelical Protestantism” was the most powerful of the Antebellum ‘subcultures.’<sup>308</sup> Hays’ requirement that referencing the scriptures as a source is of greater value when there is ‘availability’ in both author and recipient would appear to be fulfilled in this instance.<sup>309</sup> It is unlikely that even the majority of Lincoln’s audience would have been intimately acquainted with the finer points of the Sermon on the Mount, but it is more than possible that they would have understood the stark comparison that Lincoln’s Biblical paraphrase intended to evoke.

In support of the suggestion that his audience would have largely understood Lincoln’s paraphrase, a brief examination of the usage of the term ‘mammon’ in the Antebellum is presented. Some indication of the familiarity of the term is seen in the example of the widespread popularity of Harris’<sup>310</sup> work entitled *Mammon*.<sup>311</sup> This well-received book was a discussion on the issues of covetousness, selfishness and Christian liberality.<sup>312</sup> The volume contains 249 pages, and at no point did the author feel the need to explain or define the term mammon, despite it being the title of the book. This work is contemporary to Lincoln’s remarks at Peoria and, as was the case for Harris, Lincoln was able to use the word ‘mammon’ without fear of being misunderstood by his audience.

A commentary from the 1850s offered the following treatise on the word ‘mammon’, stating:

Mammon was a common word in the east among Phoenicians, Syrians and others signifying (*material*) riches, or (*worldly*) wealth. It is here personified as a kind of *god of this world* ... One cannot serve two contrary gods.<sup>313</sup>

Henry W. Beecher,<sup>314</sup> a contemporary whom Lincoln admired,<sup>315</sup> articulated this understanding of ‘mammon’ during a sermon. Beecher developed the point that

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<sup>308</sup> Carwardine, *Purpose and Power*, Location 63.

<sup>309</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 29.

<sup>310</sup> John Harris D.D. (1802—1856) was an English Congregational minister. This publication sold over 100,000 in the USA.

<sup>311</sup> John Harris, *Mammon, or Covetousness the Sin of the Church* (New York: Lane and Scott, 1850).

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>313</sup> James Morison, *A Practical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895), 98.

<sup>314</sup> Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887) was the minister of the Plymouth Congregational Church, Brooklyn during Lincoln’s Presidency. He was an abolitionist and social reformer, widely known and admired for his oratory. Edgar D. Jones, *Lincoln and the Preachers* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1948. Reprint, 1970); Applegate, *Most Famous Man in America*.

<sup>315</sup> Carpenter recorded that a gallery usher in Beecher’s church reported to him that in 1860, “Mr. Lincoln was twice present at the morning services of that Church.” Carpenter further commented, “Mr.

Christian life should not be devoid of pleasure, which can even be considered to be the favour of the Almighty. He concluded:

The church has been so fearful of amusements that the devil has had the care of them. The chaplet of flowers has been snatched from the brow of Christ, and given to mammon.<sup>316</sup>

Beecher's use of the word 'mammon' is further evidence that the understanding of Antebellum Americans was that the word referred to the "god of this world"<sup>317</sup>, namely that mammon is utterly opposed to, and inconsistent with, the purposes of God. For Lincoln to relate Douglas' position of Popular Sovereignty, and the Declaration of Independence, with Christ's comparison between God and mammon, was a most damning of indictments.

It is therefore suggested that Lincoln was drawing upon the tenor of this section of the Sermon on the Mount involving the comparison of extremes, Earth and Heaven,<sup>318</sup> Light and Dark<sup>319</sup>, and ultimately God and mammon. It is difficult to imagine a more dramatic condemnation of Douglas' argument. If it is the case that the context of dramatic comparisons is at play here, then Lincoln's point is that the American people should embrace the implications of the Kansas-Nebraska only if the God of heaven could form a coalition with the worldly rule of flesh and sin. "Let no one be deceived. The spirit of seventy-six and the spirit of Nebraska, are utter antagonisms; and the former is being rapidly displaced by the latter."<sup>320</sup>

It is not unreasonable to submit that this is an example of Lincoln building upon an argument of political logic and delivering the conclusion by engaging with the Bible, in this case by means of a particularly clear paraphrase.

### **2.8.2.3.3. The robe is soiled**

Lincoln concluded his remarks on the inconsistency of Douglas' policy with the Declaration of Independence. McPherson points out that the Declaration "was the

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Lincoln henceforward had a profound admiration for the talents of the famous pastor." Francis B. Carpenter, *Six Months at the White House with Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1867), 134-135.

<sup>316</sup> Henry Ward Beecher, *Life Thoughts: Gathered from the Extemporaneous Discourses of Henry Ward Beecher: By One of His Congregation* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Co., 1858), 185.

<sup>317</sup> Morison, *Practical Commentary*, 98.

<sup>318</sup> Matthew 6:19-20.

<sup>319</sup> Matthew 6:22-23.

<sup>320</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 275.

foundation of Lincoln's political philosophy."<sup>321</sup> Oates considered that it was in Peoria that Lincoln "felt a powerful calling now, a sense of mission to save the Republic's noblest ideals."<sup>322</sup> Lincoln then uttered 118 words in which he drew attention to the almost worldwide condemnation of slavery.<sup>323</sup> Lincoln delivered his argument with the following statement: "Our republican robe is soiled, trailed in the dust. Let us repurify it. Let us turn and wash it white, in the spirit, if not in the blood, of the Revolution."<sup>324</sup>

An audience who were reasonably aware of the Bible may have recognised what appears to be Lincoln's allusion to the Apocalypse. There is a case for stating the similarity with some of the imagery and language of Revelation 6-7. The concept of being arrayed in white robes is a feature of the redeemed in Revelation 6 and 7, which is mentioned on four occasions. In Revelation 6:11 the martyrs were dressed in white robes,<sup>325</sup> and in Revelation 7:9 the Apostle John saw an infinite congregation with white robes.<sup>326</sup> In Revelation 7:13 one of the elders<sup>327</sup> posed a question to the apostle: "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?"<sup>328</sup> The elder proceeded to answer his own question, at John's request in Revelation 7:14, "These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

The criteria for identifying Biblical allusions set forth in Chapter One of this thesis would suggest that Lincoln is adorning his argument with an allusion to verse 14 in particular. Lincoln referred to the soiled Republican robe that should be white; the language here is comparable to that which describes the white robes of Revelation. Again Tate's requirement is fulfilled that a Biblical allusion should 'conjure up' in the memory of the audience events and objects from the original text.<sup>329</sup> Massaux's

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<sup>321</sup> Thomas F. Schwartz, *For a Vast Future Also: Essays from the Journal of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 116.

<sup>322</sup> Oates, *Malice Toward None*, 115.

<sup>323</sup> "Already the liberal party all over the world, express the apprehension 'that the one retrograde institution in America, is undermining the principles of progress.'" Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 2*. 276.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>325</sup> "And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them, that they should rest for a little season." Revelation 6:10-11.

<sup>326</sup> "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." Revelation 7:9.

<sup>327</sup> "And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God." Revelation 7:11.

<sup>328</sup> Revelation 7:13.

<sup>329</sup> Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, Location 1732.

contention is certainly applicable in this case, that material that looks like Revelation “is likely to depend” on Revelation.<sup>330</sup> Beale’s assertion the presence of wording that is parallel in concept, syntax, cluster or motif,<sup>331</sup> also seems to lend credence to the contention that Lincoln’s words could be considered as a “virtually certain” allusion.<sup>331</sup>

Lincoln spoke of the robe being washed “in the spirit if not in the blood of the Revolution.” The picture is of purification through the sacrifice of Christ, whose blood is the agent of cleansing. This image of white raiment for the redeemed is repeated on four other occasions in Revelation.<sup>332</sup> Lincoln didn’t seek to compare the blood of the revolution<sup>333</sup> with the blood of Christ, but he did invoke the imagery of Revelation. Although Lincoln stopped short of that comparison, McPherson points out that the principles and sacrifices of the American Revolutionaries were part of what distinguished America as a great nation.<sup>334</sup> For Lincoln to declare that the symbolic ‘robe’ of the Republic was soiled was not simply a cheap political statement. A cleansing was needed and in the same way that purification in Revelation came to those who held firm to faith in Christ,<sup>335</sup> so the Republican Robe was to be cleansed by holding fast to the spirit of the Founding Fathers. Lincoln considered that the threat posed by the policy of Popular Sovereignty required decisive and concerted opposition.

The suggestion put forth by both Fornieri and Lehreman is that many leading historians have not sufficiently examined, or even acknowledged, Lincoln’s use of the Bible in this Address. An example of this is Guelzo’s examination of this Address. He transcribes the entire 89-word section in which Lincoln dealt with the soiled Republican Robe, without any mention of the possibility that the Bible, and the book of Revelation in particular, may have influenced Lincoln’s line of argument.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> It has already been stated in Subsection 1.6 of this thesis, Massaux’s original statement refers to Matthew’s Gospel. Gregory, *Reception of Luke and Acts*, 6.

<sup>331</sup> Beale, *Handbook*, Location 775.

<sup>332</sup> Revelation 3:5; 3:18; 19:8; 19:14.

<sup>333</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 276.

<sup>334</sup> “These were the principles that for Lincoln made America stand for something unique and important in the world; they were the principles that the heroes of the Revolution whom Lincoln revered had fought and died for; without these principles the United States would become just another oppressive autocracy.” Schwartz, *For a Vast Future*, 116.

<sup>335</sup> “To him that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment.” Revelation 3:5.

<sup>336</sup> Guelzo, *Redeemer President*, 191.

#### **2.8.2.3.4. A blessed people**

Lincoln constructs a short paragraph with emotionally charged rhetoric, which moved the discussion on the extension of slavery into a moral and even spiritual issue. The use of Lincoln's personal logic, and his reliance on the Bible, formulated the point that Douglas' position was both un-American and possibly unchristian.<sup>337</sup> Lincoln concluded this paragraph with the expression that if his objectives could be reached, then "millions of free happy people, the world over, shall rise up, and call us blessed, to the latest generations."<sup>338</sup> Lincoln's concluding sentence was reflective of the words with which Proverbs 31:28 concludes its description of a virtuous woman:<sup>339</sup> "Her children shall rise up and call her blessed." This Old Testament reference was pertinent to the Address, in that Lincoln invoked its connection with virtue and blessing.

The other significant use of this phrase occurs in the Magnificat in Luke 1:48, "For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." The picture of the Virgin Mary extolling the benevolence of the Almighty brings gravitas by comparison of one monumental event with another. The uniquely miraculous way that God dealt with Mary furnished Lincoln with the dramatic language for his Republican agenda. Mary's reaction to the Immaculate Conception was that she would be internationally renowned as blessed. For Lincoln the same would be the case if the Kansas-Nebraska Act were put aside.

#### **2.8.2.3.5. Lincoln's correction of Douglas**

Lincoln continued the Address with reference to an encounter with Douglas that took place in Springfield on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 1854.<sup>340</sup> During that address, Lincoln was interrupted by Douglas, who asserted that his policy of Popular Sovereignty was in fact an ancient creed; indeed, the Senator traced its thinking back to the Garden of Eden.

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<sup>337</sup> "Let us turn slavery from its claims of 'moral right,' back upon its existing legal rights, and its arguments of 'necessity.' Let us return it to the position our fathers gave it...Let all Americans-Let lovers of liberty everywhere-join in the great and good work. If we do this, we shall not only have saved the union; but we shall have so saved it, as to make, and to keep it, forever worthy of the saving." Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 276.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> Proverbs 31:10-31.

<sup>340</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 276.

It originated when God made man and placed good and evil before him, allowing him to choose for himself, being responsible for the choice he should make.<sup>341</sup>

Douglas restated this immediately, and Lincoln provided the following rebuttal.

God did not place good and evil before man, telling him to make his choice. On the contrary, he did tell him there was one tree, of the fruit of which, he should not eat, upon pain of certain death.<sup>342</sup>

The value of this insertion is that it demonstrates the fact that Lincoln knew the Bible intimately; even when presented with a skilled debater like Douglas, he was able to correct his misuse of the text. Further evidence of Lincoln's hermeneutical agility is the fact that he not only corrected Douglas' interpretation, but he actually used his correct summation to deliver a stinging point. It has been stated in the previous paragraph that Lincoln's observation was that man was not given a choice in Eden, but a commandment to be obeyed on pain of death. Lincoln then remarked: "I should scarcely wish so strong a prohibition against slavery in Nebraska." It is possible to examine these examples of Lincoln's engagement with the Bible and to notice a degree of dexterity in his handling of the scriptures.

### **2.8.3. Conclusion to the Peoria Address**

The Address was an important event for Lincoln. There is evidence that the political circumstances that inspired his contribution served to crystallise his thinking, as well as providing ignition for his renewed political aspirations. Anastaplo asserted that sections of this address were indeed "at the heart of the prudential policies he developed both as a candidate and as President."<sup>343</sup> The Address is correctly presented as the beginning of Lincoln's opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska legislation, which was 'well defined' during the two senatorial campaigns and in the various addresses he embarked upon after 1854.<sup>344</sup> His attitude to slavery and central government was also outlined. This is substantiated further by Fornieri, who states, "Indeed the design and argument of many of Lincoln's subsequent speeches against slavery can be found

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<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 278.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> George Anastaplo, *Abraham Lincoln: A Constitutional Biography* (Maryland: Roman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2001), 303.

<sup>344</sup> Clarke D. Forsythe, *Politics for the Greatest Good: The Case for Prudence in the Public Square* (Downers Grove: I.V.P., 2009), 118.



in his earlier Peoria address.”<sup>345</sup> In the Address, Lincoln also demonstrated the major influences that would characterize his political career: the Declaration of Independence, logic, and the King James Bible. In his reflection upon the Address, Lehreman observes that the words of the Bible

Had been studied, even internalized, by Lincoln, so as to give him command of their teachings and the subtleties of the English Language. Perhaps they inspired the elegant simplicity and power of his mature prose.<sup>346</sup>

It is difficult to conceive of the eloquence of Lincoln’s most celebrated achievements without the presence of these stated influences. The dramatic nature of the points Lincoln made would have been considerably weakened, or even diluted, had he not used the Bible in the way that he did. The percentage of text influenced by the Bible is small, but its influence upon the delivery of points of central importance was profound, even irreplaceable.

## **2.9. Conclusion to Chapter Two**

This examination of Lincoln’s formative years has established the beginning of his use of the Bible in his political speeches and writings. It can be argued that he displayed some degree of adroitness in the way that he sought recourse to the Bible in order to deliver political points which he believed to be right for the prosperity of the Republic. Lincoln did not use the Bible at every opportunity, and when he did, it was certainly as a politician and not as a preacher. His two major speeches of these early years, namely the Lyceum and Peoria Addresses, both contain examples of his engagement with the Bible. These were political papers and were not intended to promote any religious agenda. However, Lincoln considered that the power of the language of the King James Bible was the highest authority to which he could appeal, and he did so in order to urge the preservation of the Republic and his passionate opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Lincoln’s awareness of the power of Biblical language and imagery furnished him with a facility that gave power to his text. Lincoln’s imaginative use of the Bible added a dimension that Lincoln appeared to believe would not come from another source.

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<sup>345</sup> Fornieri, *Language of Liberty*, 151.

<sup>346</sup> Lehrman, *Lincoln at Peoria*, 248.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE DIVIDING HOUSE

#### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter continues the examination of the place of the Bible in Lincoln's political writings and speeches. The years that immediately followed his Peoria Address would not yield a major speech until 1858. He continued in legal partnership with Herndon while taking a keen and increasing interest in politics. Lincoln's compositions in 1858 are of such importance to the topic at hand that this chapter and a portion of Chapter Four will be devoted to this crucial year. In 1858 Lincoln delivered a speech in which his use of one Bible verse arguably contributed to the agenda of a Civil War, and eventually preserved the Republic while ending American chattel slavery forever. These valuable achievements came at the expense of literally hundreds of thousands of lives.

#### 3.2. Lincoln's general use of the Bible in this period

Lincoln wrote an intensely personal letter to John Johnston.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the letter was to respond to Johnston's news that Lincoln's father was gravely ill.<sup>2</sup> Lincoln concludes his letter in a manner reminiscent of Jesus in Matthew 10:29-30:

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Lincoln cited the Bible's teaching of eternal life, and used this to pass on comfort to his father through Johnston. The clarity and nature of this material is such that an extended quotation is necessary:

I sincerely hope Father may yet recover his health; but at all events tell him to remember to call upon, and confide in, our great, and good, and merciful Maker; who will not turn away from him in any extremity. He notes the fall of a sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our heads; and He

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<sup>1</sup> "His step brother, John D. Johnston, for whom Mr. Lincoln always exhibited the affection of a real brother." Wilson and Davis, *Herndon's Lincoln*, 365.

<sup>2</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 96.

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 one gone before; and where [the rest] of us, through the help of God, hope ere-long [to join] them.<sup>3</sup>

During the progress of this thesis the understandable question will arise regarding the sincerity of Lincoln's engagement with the Bible. It is important to consider that on this occasion Lincoln was writing this letter as a son, and not a politician. He was writing to family, with no audience to impress. This letter can justifiably be submitted as offering something of a window into the private beliefs of this private man, who used the Bible to reflect upon a matter of intense personal significance.

Lincoln could be somewhat unpredictable in deciding when to use the Bible in his compositions. There were occasions when the use of the Bible would have seemed appropriate; and yet he made no such offering. During the early 1850s two important political figures died. The first was President Zachary Taylor,<sup>4</sup> who had only been inaugurated the previous year; the second was Senator Henry Clay.<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to note that when Lincoln delivered local eulogies in honour of both men, there was no significant use of the Bible. In the Taylor eulogy there were no quotations or allusions from the Bible, with only a couple of mentions of God.<sup>6</sup> The Clay eulogy extended for 5,300 words. Lincoln dealt with political issues of the day in which Clay was interested, especially the injustice of slavery. Towards the conclusion of the tribute Lincoln presented this paraphrase of the Divine punishment upon Egypt:

Pharaoh's country was cursed with plagues, and his hosts were drowned in the Red Sea for striving to retain a captive people who had already served them more than four hundred years. May like disasters never befall us.<sup>7</sup>

The conclusion to the eulogy invoked God's blessing and protection for the future.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*. Vol. 2. 97.

<sup>4</sup> Zachary Taylor (1784-1850) was a General officer in the United States Army for 40 years. Taylor was the twelfth President of the United States.  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/zacharytaylor>, accessed 20<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Clay (1777-1852) served in Congress and was Speaker of the House of Representatives on three separate occasions. He served several times in the Senate and his last term extended from 1849 until his death in 1852. He was a significant influence on Lincoln's political thinking.  
<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay>, accessed 20<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 83-90.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

The example of these eulogies illustrates that when it may have been expected to have used the Bible, Lincoln did not always seize the opportunity. The pattern is beginning to emerge that Lincoln made judgments on when to use the Bible, which were based entirely on when he thought the occasion demanded, and not as a matter of predictable formality.

### **3.3. Further use of the Bible during 1858**

During this seminal year Lincoln delivered what would eventually be celebrated as one of his greatest and most important speeches. There are other occasions in which Lincoln's use of the Bible provides further indication of the place of the scriptures in his thinking, as he sought to increase his sphere of influence.

#### **3.3.1. First Lecture on Discoveries and Inventions**

On the 6<sup>th</sup> April 1858 in Bloomington, Illinois,<sup>9</sup> Lincoln delivered a lecture on the subject of "Discoveries and Inventions."<sup>10</sup> The very title of Lincoln's lecture suggested a theme of modernity; and yet Lincoln quoted more fully and more frequently from the Bible than he had done in any previous public address. In fact 47% of Lincoln's lecture was dedicated to direct quotation of the Bible, and evaluation of the relevance of these quotations to the subject at hand.<sup>11</sup> Although Lincoln's lecture is not expressly a political speech, it was delivered in the context of a politician attempting to increase his reputation as a public figure.

##### **3.3.1.1. The place of the Bible in Lincoln's First Lecture**

Lincoln began his lecture with an assertion that all of life presented itself as an opportunity to discover and invent, "All creation is a mine, and every man a miner."<sup>12</sup> He engaged his audience with the thought that the earliest inclination of mankind was

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<sup>8</sup> "Let us strive to deserve, as far as mortal may, the continued care of Divine Providence, trusting that in future national emergencies, He will not fail to provide us the instruments of safety and security." Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> The lecture was delivered to the Young Men's Association in Bloomington, Illinois. Ibid., 437, Footnote1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 437-442.

<sup>11</sup> A word count calculated from the CW yielded the following result. Lincoln's lecture on Discoveries and Inventions, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1858, was 2217 words in length. 1047 of Lincoln's words related directly to the Lincoln's biblical quotations, as it served to illustrate his subject. Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 437.

to invent.<sup>13</sup> The first discovery of man was that he was naked, and thus clothing became the first invention.<sup>14</sup> Lincoln's treatment of this issue contains such extensive evidence of his engagement with the Bible that extended quotation is presented.

At the first interview of the Almighty with Adam and Eve, after the fall, He made "coats of skins, and clothed them" Gen: 3-21. The Bible makes no other allusion to clothing, before the flood. Soon after the deluge Noah's two sons covered him with a garment; but of what material the garment was made is not mentioned. Gen. 9-23. Abraham mentions "thread" in such connection as to indicate that spinning and weaving were in use in his day---Gen. 14.23--- and soon after, reference to the art is frequently made. "Linen breeches, ["] are mentioned,---Exod. 28.42---and it is said "all the women that were wise hearted, did spin with their hands" (35-25) and, "all the women whose hearts stirred them up in wisdom, spun goat's hair" (35-26). The work of the "weaver" is mentioned--- (35-35). In the book of Job, a very old book, date not exactly known, the "weavers shuttle" is mentioned. The above mention of "thread" by Abraham is the oldest recorded allusion to spinning and weaving; and it was made about two thousand years after the creation of man, and now, near four thousand years ago. Profane authors think these arts originated in Egypt; and this is not contradicted, or made improbable, by any thing in the Bible; for the allusion of Abraham, mentioned, was not made until after he had sojourned in Egypt.<sup>15</sup>

In accordance with the introductory criteria for elements of Biblical Reception it can be submitted that Lincoln offered two paraphrases from Genesis 9:23 and 14:23. He included six direct quotations supported by textual citation, Genesis 3:21, Exodus 28:42, 35:25, 35:26, and 35:35. These are presented within quotation marks and vary in length between one and thirteen words. It can also be observed that Lincoln presented a two-word quotation identified as belonging to the book of Job, but without the provision of chapter and verse.

Lincoln then directed the Lecture towards industry. He made the point that not every detail of every human action is recorded in the Bible. He considered that by the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 438.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 438.

time Noah constructed the Ark, iron, and therefore axes, must have existed, "It seems to me an axe, or a miracle, was indispensable."<sup>16</sup> He proceeded with a detailed case for this premise, which again relied substantially upon direct quotation from the Bible.<sup>17</sup> Lincoln employed seven direct biblical quotations, again clearly identified and supported by full textual citations. The verses to which Lincoln referred are Genesis 4:22, Numbers 35:16, Deuteronomy 3:11, 4:20, 27:5, 19:5 and 8:9.<sup>18</sup> The quotations vary between three and nine words in length.

Lincoln then addressed himself to the issue of transportation, in particular the invention of the wheel and the axle.<sup>19</sup> He again utilized direct quotations from the Bible, the first of which followed the previous pattern of citation, from Genesis 41:43.<sup>20</sup> Lincoln mentioned "chariot-wheels" without quotation marks, but furnished the reference Exodus 14:25.<sup>21</sup> He mention that chariots and horse are mentioned together in Exodus 14:9 and 14:23, without the use of direct quotation.<sup>22</sup> Lincoln made a brief mention of water borne transit, again Lincoln's only source of material was the Bible, employing one reference from Genesis 49:13.<sup>23</sup>

Lincoln proceeded with a discourse on labour and the first industry that he identified as agriculture. Lincoln used the Genesis account as his source for this suggestion, noting that man "was put into the garden of Eden 'to dress it and keep it."<sup>24</sup> This is a direct quotation from Genesis 2:15, and it is interesting to note that Lincoln did not use quotation marks until the final six words, and provided no textual

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> "Corresponding with the prime necessity for iron, we find at least one very early notice of it. Tubal-cain was "an instructor of every artificer in *brass* and *iron*["]---Gen: 4-22. Tubal-cain was the seventh in decent from Adam; and his birth was about one thousand years before the flood. *After* the flood, frequent mention is made of *iron*, and *instruments* made of iron. Thus "instrument of iron" at Num: 35-16; "bed-stead of iron" at Deut. 3-11---- "the iron furnace ["] at 4-20--- and "iron tool" at 27-5. At 19-5--- very distinct mention of "the axe to cut down the tree" is made; and also at 8-9, the promised land is described as "a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." From the somewhat frequent mention of brass in connection with iron, it is not improbable that brass---perhaps what we now call copper---was used by the ancients for some of the same purposes as iron." Ibid., 439.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> "The oldest recorded allusion to the wheel and axle is the mention of a "chariot" Gen: 41-43. This was in Egypt, upon the occasion of Joseph being made Governor by Pharaoh. It was about twentyfive hundred years after the creation of Adam. That the chariot then mentioned was a wheel-carriage drawn by animals, is sufficiently evidenced by the mention of chariot-*wheels*, at Exod. 14-25, and the mention of chariots in connection with *horses*, in the same chapter, verses 9 & 23. So much, at present, for land-transportation." Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> "If we pass by the Ark, which may be regarded as belonging rather to the *miraculous*, than to *human* invention the first notice we have of water-craft, is the mention of "ships" by Jacob---Gen: 49-13. It is not till we reach the book of Isaiah that we meet with the mention of "oars" and "sails." Ibid., 440.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

reference. He also acknowledged that agriculture was the first to benefit from technology, but had been left out of the inventive activities of the 1850's.<sup>25</sup> He continued his Lecture with an examination of the discovery of the usefulness of animals, with particular relevance to transportation.<sup>26</sup> This brief section contains four direct quotations with textual citations, Genesis 22:3, 24:61, 42:26, and Exodus 15:1. Lincoln then pointed out that the following biblical references supported his observation that animals became means of conveyance, Genesis 41:43, 46:29, Exodus 14:25, and Deuteronomy 22:10. During his final section Lincoln continued to offer direct reference to the Bible. The prophet Isaiah is mentioned as part of the identification of the age of the technology of sailing ships.<sup>27</sup> Lincoln employed a direction quotation from Matthew 24:41, "The language of the Saviour 'Two women shall be grinding at the mill.'"<sup>28</sup> Although Lincoln did not furnish textual citation, this quotation was identified as Christ's.

Lincoln delivered his Second Lecture on Discoveries and Inventions, which shall be considered immediately. Many scholars consider both addresses to be two halves of the same lecture, and as such offer commentary and consideration of this material as a unity. It will be prudent for the purposes of this thesis to consider the Second Lecture before offering a conclusion that would be applicable to both papers.

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<sup>25</sup> "This was the beginning of agriculture; and although, both in point of time, and of importance, it stands at the head of all branches of human industry, it has derived less direct advantage from Discovery and Invention than most." Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> "The earliest instance of it mentioned, is when 'Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass,["] Gen. 22-3 preparatory to sacrificing Isaac as a burnt-offering; but the allusion to the *saddle* indicates that riding had been in use some time; for it is quite probable they rode bare-backed awhile, at least, before they invented saddles. Accordingly we find that when the servant of Abraham went in search of a wife for Isaac, he took ten *camels* with him; and, on his return trip, 'Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man" Gen 24-61[.] The *horse*, too, as a riding animal, is mentioned early. The Red sea being safely passed, Moses and the children of Israel sang to the Lord 'the *horse*, and his  *rider* hath he thrown into the sea." Exodus 15-1. Seeing that animals could bear *man* upon their backs, it would soon occur that they could also bear other burthens. Accordingly we find that Joseph's brethren, on their first visit to Egypt, 'laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence" Gen. 42-26. Also it would occur that animals could be made to *draw* burthens *after* them, as well as to bear them upon their backs; and hence ploughs and chariots came into use early enough to be often mentioned in the books of Moses---Deut. 22-10. Gen. 41-43. Gen. 46-29. Exodus 14-25." Ibid., 441.

<sup>27</sup> "That the difficulties of controlling this power are very great is quite evident by the fact that they have already been perceived, and struggled with more than three thousand years; for that power was applied to sail-vessels, at least as early as the time of the prophet Isaiah ... a thing now well known, and extensively used." Ibid., 442.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

### 3.3.2. Second Lecture on Discoveries and Inventions

Lincoln delivered his Second Lecture on Discoveries and Inventions on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1859.<sup>29</sup> Although this chapter is devoted to 1858, because this lecture is so thematically linked to the first means that its examination would be prudent at this juncture. The Lecture was presented to the Phi Alpha society of Illinois College at Jacksonville,<sup>30</sup> and repeated in Decatur and Springfield.<sup>31</sup> There are differences between the First and Second Lectures, although Briggs collected compelling evidence to suggest that the two separate entries in the CW were part of the same text.<sup>32</sup> One immediate feature of the Second Lecture is its extended length in comparison to the First.<sup>33</sup>

In his Second Lecture, Lincoln addressed himself to the issue of progress. He commenced with a contemporary phrase, namely “Young America.”<sup>34</sup> He compared the concept of Young America<sup>35</sup> with the term “Old Fogy.”<sup>36</sup> This was Lincoln’s attempt to prove that expansion and invention had in fact been part of human development since the dawn of time.

#### 3.3.2.1. The place of the Bible in Lincoln’s Second Lecture

In his First Lecture Lincoln’s source material derived almost entirely from the Pentateuch. In contrast, Lincoln’s first Biblical allusion in this Lecture was a citation from the end of the New Testament. Lincoln’s concentrated his remarks at ‘Young America’ and the belief that American expansion was to spread the benefits of the

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<sup>29</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3. 357.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 356, Footnote 1.

<sup>31</sup> Both of these occasions when Lincoln repeated his Second Lecture on Discoveries and Inventions occurred within the Month of February 1859. Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Briggs, *Lincoln’s Speeches*, 190-192.

<sup>33</sup> Lincoln’s First Lecture on discoveries and Inventions was 2213 words in length, while the Second Lecture was 3340 words. These figures are calculated from the texts of the Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 438-443. While the word count for Lincoln’s second lecture on Discoveries and Inventions is calculated from Ibid., Vol. 3. 357-364.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 356.

<sup>35</sup> “Young America” was a phrase associated with an ambitious and progressive program of national vision, championed by Senator Douglas, and was primarily a feature of Democrat political thought. Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 1. Locations 12663-77; Edward L. Widmer, *Young America: The Flowering of Democracy in New York City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>36</sup> “Old Fogy” was a derogatory designation used by devotees of the Young America persuasion to describe what they considered to be old-fashioned ideas of the Whig Party. Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 1. Locations 12670-77.



new Republic, this became known as ‘Manifest Destiny.’<sup>37</sup> He suggested that the aforementioned ambitions would be surpassed by the biblical New Earth, “and the new earth mentioned in the revelations, in which, being no more sea, there must be about three times as much land as in the present.”<sup>38</sup> Lincoln’s mention of the ‘new earth’ and the exact wording of Revelation 21:1 ‘no more sea,’ strongly suggest this can be considered as a biblical paraphrase. This is strengthened by Lincoln’s citation of his source, ‘in the revelation.’

It is interesting to observe that the wider tone of Lincoln’s remarks were slightly humorous, almost sarcastic in his commentary of “Young America.” This furnishes a salient example of Lincoln’s approach to the Bible. He did not consider it to have exclusively religious value; for Lincoln it was possible to engage with the Bible for practical and political reasons. On this occasion he even used the Bible as an illustrative tool, which was used to expose and caricature the ideologies of his political opponents. It is also something of a testimony to Lincoln’s deftness that he able to paraphrase the Bible in such a manner without causing offence to the religious sensibilities, of a considerable percentage of his audience.

Lincoln moved from the end of the New Testament to the early chapters of the Old Testament, and addressed himself to the case of the father of the human race.<sup>39</sup> Lincoln again directed his humour in the direction of ‘Young America,’ “Take, for instance, the first of all fogies, father Adam.” Speaking of the simplicity of Adam’s existence he compared the ‘Old fogy’ Adam with ‘Young American’ opulence, “No part of his breakfast had been brought from the other side of the world.” Lincoln commented on the fact that although ‘Young America’ might consider Adam out of date, he was actually “in the ascendant. He had dominion over all the earth, and all the living things upon and around it; but never fret, Young America will re-annex it.”<sup>40</sup> Lincoln used the Genesis narrative to make a number of points. He offered the serious reflection that the first man was also the first inventor, of clothing.<sup>41</sup> Lincoln also noted that Adam, “had first to invent the art of invention – the instance at least, if not

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<sup>37</sup> Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: America’s Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang Publishing, 1996), 16, 59; Edward L. Widmer, *Young America: The Flowering of Democracy in New York City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3 and 213.

<sup>38</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3. 357.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 357-358.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 359.

the habit of observation and reflection.”<sup>42</sup> Lincoln moved on to credit Adam with the invention of language. Lincoln observed that speech was a gift of God, but he stated that, “Whether Divine gift, or invention, it is still plain that a mode of communication had been left to invention.”<sup>43</sup> Lincoln considered the invention of writing, stating that the precise date is unknown but “it certainly was as early as the time of Moses.”<sup>44</sup> In a lecture on a thoughtful subject to a serious audience, Lincoln was evidently comfortable in referring to a period of biblical narrative as part of a credible chronology.<sup>45</sup>

Lincoln continued in his reflection on the development of writing. He concluded with this sentence, “Take it from us, and the Bible, all history, all science, all government, all commerce, and nearly all social intercourse go with it.”<sup>46</sup> Lincoln’s recall to all elements of modern life as testimony to the essential nature of the invention of writing placed the Bible toward the beginning of a list of crucial factors in the American experience. The other components in this list are for the most part tangible and intensely practical. He placed the Bible ahead of history, science, government, and commerce. It is possible that the list is simply a random presentation of factors and sources of authoritative consideration, but Lincoln was meticulous in preparation and certainly not given to haphazard construction within his texts. It is therefore reasonable to deduce that this is a further indication of the importance of the Bible in Lincoln’s compositions.

### **3.3.3. Analysis of Lincoln’s use of the Bible in both Lectures**

There are mixed reports as to the reception of Lincoln’s lectures on Discoveries and Inventions. Herndon dismissed Lincoln’s efforts as a “Lifeless thing.”<sup>47</sup> He considered that Lincoln’s composition proved that he “Had not the fire, taste, reading, eloquence, etc. which would make him a lecturer.”<sup>48</sup> These remarks might be better understood in light of material presented in Chapter Six, where an examination is submitted of the possibility that Herndon possessed a distinct aversion for anything

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 360.

<sup>45</sup> “If so, the language in which the five books of Moses were written must, at that time, now thirty-three or four hundred years ago, have consisted of at least one quarter as many, or, twenty thousand.” Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 361.

<sup>47</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1.* 444.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 444-445.

approaching a literal acceptance of the claims of the Bible.<sup>49</sup> Burlingame's assessment of journalistic reaction is that "The lecture failed to impress."<sup>50</sup> Byers noted three days after Lincoln delivered his Second Lecture that the *Illinois State Journal* reported, "It was received with repeated and hearty bursts of applause,"<sup>51</sup> which actually suggests that the audience on this occasion were satisfied with Lincoln's content. Despite the varied reaction these Lectures provide valuable assistance in seeking to understand the place of the Bible in Lincoln's composition and thinking, at this crucial stage of his political career.

### 3.3.3.1. Citation of the Bible's chapter and verse

Lincoln was not in the habit of accompanying biblical quotations and allusions with the textual references. In the First Lecture Lincoln interposed his material with no fewer than 27 chapter and verse references from the Bible.<sup>52</sup> When he delivered the Second Lecture he returned to his regular pattern of not citing references for his use of the Bible.<sup>53</sup>

It is not possible to submit a definitive reason for Lincoln's inclusion of biblical references in his First Lecture. However there are two possibilities worthy of suggestion. Firstly Lincoln's desire to impress as a lecturer may have motivated him to demonstrate the thoroughness of his preparation and the accuracy of his claims. Lincoln's decision to furnish biblical references empowered his audience to inspect his conjecture. Secondly to kindle an audience's interest in the given subject, and in doing so to provide textual citation which would enable the recipient to employ the reference in further examination the claims of the discussion. It is reasonable to conclude that Lincoln used the Bible to construct his case that the quest for discovery and inventiveness had always been a basis human instinct.

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<sup>49</sup> Section 6.6.1 of this thesis.

<sup>50</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1.* 444.

<sup>51</sup> J. R. Byers, *The Comeback: Abraham Lincoln in 1859* (Kindle books, 2010), Locations 883-89.

<sup>52</sup> The following 27 biblical references were included in Lincoln's first Lecture on Discoveries and Inventions. Genesis 3:21; 4:22; 9:23; 14:23; 22:3; 24:61; 41:43 (twice); 42:26; 46:29; 49:13; Exodus 14:9; 14:23; 14:25 (twice); 15:1; 28:42; 35:25; 35:26; 35:35; Numbers 35:16; Deuteronomy 3:11; 4:20; 8:9; 19:5; 22:10 & 27:5. These references appear in the Lincoln text of this lecture in Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 2.* 437-442.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, *Vol.3.* 356-363.

### 3.3.3.2. Lincoln's practical approach to the Bible

It has already been established that Lincoln did not confine his use of the Bible to religious matters. It is even possible to say that in his Lectures Lincoln did not even restrict his application of the Bible to moral matters. For example, the invention of animal transportation<sup>54</sup> could hardly be described as an essentially moral or spiritual issue. The most obvious way for a politician to use the Bible is in a religious matter at hand, or possibly a moral matter about which the scriptures clearly spoke.

Lincoln grew up reading the Bible in an intensely Christian community, in a physical context devoid of the luxury of purely spiritual considerations. Life in the frontier communities was a matter of survival, and therefore religion and the teaching of the Bible necessarily touched all areas of life.<sup>55</sup> An important element of Lincoln's treatment of the Bible is seen in the way in which he uses it in environments to which it would not have naturally appeared to belong. For Lincoln the Bible had value in presenting and defending political discourse, and even provided guidance in the human technological journey. The opportunity to speak on the issue of Discoveries and Inventions would not immediately suggest the need for an extensive use of the Bible. In the mind of Lincoln the Bible and the technological progression of mankind were intrinsically linked. These Lectures demonstrate that Lincoln did not consider the Bible to be exclusively a source of purely religious truth and guidance. Lincoln's reliance on the Bible as a source for trace the historical development of human inventiveness clearly demonstrates that he valued the Bible's historicity. The Lecture also contains critique of 'Manifest Destiny,' which was punctuated with Lincoln's reference to the Bible, which could be regarded as further suggestion that he considered that the Bible to be of value in the political arena of discussion.

It is interesting to consider this example of Lincoln's use of the Bible in the light of Anthony Thiselton's thoughts, which relate to the reader's horizon of expectation of the text. Porter summarizes Gadamer and Thiselton's ideas by stating that effective engagement with the biblical text is achieved "as the interpreter's horizon moves towards fusion with the horizon of the text."<sup>56</sup> Thiselton points out that a horizon is by nature "a limitation and yet also capable of movement and

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., Vol.2. 441.

<sup>55</sup> Lincoln's upbringing and his early religious life are examined in Sections 2.2 of this thesis.

<sup>56</sup> Stanley E. Porter, and Matthew R. Malcolm, eds. *Horizons in Hermeneutics: A Festschrift in Honor of Anthony C. Thiselton* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013) Kindle edition, Location 134.

expansion.”<sup>57</sup> In terms of Lincoln’s approach to the text, his horizon of expectation is shown here to be somewhat broad. He does not appear to set parameters of relevance upon the Bible. Lincoln had read the Bible privately and had listened to sermons both in Little Pigeon Creek and Springfield, and his horizon for the biblical text would have been to some degree established through this. However Thiselton suggests that there will be occasions in which the horizon based on the familiar will be challenged, and this “necessitates an expansion of my horizons to make room for the new.”<sup>58</sup> Lincoln offers an interpretation of the Bible that is intended to make a point to the most modern of topics. In doing so he shifted the horizon of expectation of the text from that which had more usually been employed, as a narrative of the fall of man, with the theological implications thereof. Thiselton’s encouragement of ‘fusion’ guides the reader away from imposing an interpretation that completely dominates the meaning of the text. The reader nevertheless possess considerable scope, as Manfred Oeming observes,

The historical interaction between the author and the reader leads to continual increase, in the role of the reader, especially as the author who wrote for an actual audience could not have foreseen the varying audience his text would address in the future.<sup>59</sup>

Kaiser points out the danger of a hermeneutical approach in which the reader’s horizon is so broad as to become irrelevant to the original intention of the author.

The desire to find what is practical, personal, challenging, and individually applicable is indeed laudatory; however, methods that essentially allow us to overlook the narrative itself leave much to be desired.<sup>60</sup>

Although it could be argued that Lincoln’s treatment of Genesis and Exodus somewhat expanded the horizon of expectation, his practical approach did not impose upon the Bible an interpretation that was inconsistent with its narrative. There can be little debate that the way in which Lincoln used the Bible in this instance did not engage with the primary purposes, for which the text was intended. However to point

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<sup>57</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 44.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>59</sup> Manfred Oeming, *Contemporary Biblical Hermeneutics: An Introduction*. Translated by Joachim F. Vette. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2006),

<sup>60</sup> Walter C. Kaiser and Moises Silva. *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994. Reprint, 2007), Kindle edition, Location 2421.

out the fact that discovery and invention took place in the Pentateuch, did not detract from other issues addressed in the text.

### 3.3.3.3. Scholarly consideration of Lincoln's Lectures

The complementary construction of both of Lincoln's Lectures, coupled with the fact that some scholars consider them to have originally been one complete address, requires combined final analysis.

The interesting comparison between the thoughts of older and more modern commentators in this regard is of note. In 1915 Howell published Lincoln's Lectures.<sup>61</sup> In his introductory essay he offered the following evaluation of the place of the Bible in Lincoln's composition of the lectures, "it reveals also his debt to that book of books for inspiration and illustration."<sup>62</sup>

Briggs's 2005 treatment of these lectures acknowledges Lincoln's use of the Bible.<sup>63</sup> He considers Lincoln's treatment of the Adamic material in the Lecture.<sup>64</sup> He asserts that Lincoln was using the context of the fall of mankind in Genesis 3 as a reason for the apparent slowness of technological progress:

The lack of progress in the labor of agriculture is a powerful reminder of the fall. Innovation, he is arguing, is possible and desirable, but ought not to proceed in ignorance of the conditions that have made discovery and invention difficult over the ages.<sup>65</sup>

Briggs concedes that Lincoln did not actually mention the fall of mankind; he does however offer an interesting assessment of 19<sup>th</sup>-century America's universally thorough knowledge of the Bible. He attempts to explain Lincoln's omission by assuming that, "Lincoln's Bible-reading audience would have detected in these lines much of the direction of his thought."<sup>66</sup> Briggs continues his thoughts on Lincoln's use of the Adamic narrative,<sup>67</sup> explaining the use of this material in the lecture. He also notes Lincoln's use of the Bible in humorous terms to deliver serious points.<sup>68</sup> He proceeds to devote time to Lincoln's treatment of the notion of "Young America,"

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<sup>61</sup> John Howell, *Discoveries and Inventions* (San Francisco: Howell, 1915).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>63</sup> Briggs, *Lincoln's Speeches*, 205-219.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 205-208.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 207-207.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 210-212.

<sup>68</sup> "Lincoln jokes at Adam's expense, '[H]e, perhaps, [did] nothing more than to stand by and thread the needle.' But the gist of the argument is more serious." *Ibid.*, 212.

and acknowledges Lincoln's use of the Bible to punctuate his political persuasions.<sup>69</sup> He provides some useful observations; an example of such is his treatment of the relationship between 'gift' and 'invention.'<sup>70</sup> However, Briggs suggests that other sources were of equal significance in Lincoln's preparation.

Briggs's treatment of these lectures is part of his work offering some 'reconsideration' of Lincoln's speeches.<sup>71</sup> Briggs credits Lincoln with having displayed evidence of thorough preparation specifically designed to "reach unconventional conclusions about a topic of common interest."<sup>72</sup> He cites the following sources employed by Lincoln: the Bible, encyclopaedias, and what he described simply as other sources familiar to the audience. Briggs supports his suggestion on sources contemporary reflection from Henry Clay Whitney,<sup>73</sup> who claimed that Lincoln's intention in his Lectures was to get to the root source of information on the subject of discoveries and inventions, and recalled Lincoln saying that the Bible was "the richest store-house for such knowledge."<sup>74</sup> Briggs continued in quotation of Whitney setting out a further 70 words in which Whitney described Lincoln's fastidious habits in preparing his speeches.<sup>75</sup> Briggs's reliance on Whitney is highlighted simply in order to establish the fact that Briggs clearly valued Whitney's recollections. He referred to an occasion when Whitney read Lincoln a copy of Bancroft's<sup>76</sup> lecture,<sup>77</sup> *The Necessity, the Reality, and the Promise of the*

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 208-210.

<sup>70</sup> "This mixture of invention with gift, and gift with invention, disperses the tendency to attribute the power and fruits of Invention to human ingenuity; yet it does so without attributing invention wholly to chance or the will of God." Ibid., 213.

<sup>71</sup> In his introduction to *Lincoln's Speeches Reconsidered* Briggs sets forth his intentions, "Concentrating on the best evidence we have of the motions of Lincoln's mind, these pages seek to complement historical research by directing attention to the interplay of form, substance, and context in the most primary records available." Ibid., 1.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>73</sup> Henry Clay Whitney (1831-1905) was a lawyer who shared Lincoln's travels around the Illinois judicial circuit. He published a multi-volume biography of Lincoln. Don E. Fehrenbacher and Virginia Fehrenbacher, eds. *Recollected Words of Abraham Lincoln* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 490; Henry C. Whitney, *Lincoln the Citizen: Volume One, A Life of Lincoln* (New York: The Baker and Taylor Company, 1892); *Lincoln the President: Volume Two, A Life of Lincoln* (New York: The Baker and Taylor Company, 1892).

<sup>74</sup> Briggs, *Lincoln's Speeches*, 199.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> George Bancroft (1800-1891) was a Harvard scholar, author and career diplomat who served for eighteen months as Secretary of the Navy, under President James Polk. [www.history.navy.mil/danfs/b2/bancroft-iii.htm](http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/b2/bancroft-iii.htm) Department of the Navy – Naval Historical Centre's website, accessed 1<sup>st</sup> November 2010.

<sup>77</sup> Briggs, *Lincoln's Speeches*, 199.

*Progress of the Human Race*.<sup>78</sup> Lincoln apparently told Whitney of his intentions to compose his own lecture on Discoveries and Inventions.<sup>79</sup> In the light of this evidence Briggs presents the interesting possibility that Bancroft's lecture influenced Lincoln's own efforts. Briggs builds his case upon his belief that Lincoln's historical proximity to Bancroft, as well as the latter's public prominence, made it almost unavoidable that influence took place. Briggs spoke of "Lincoln's interest in Bancroft,"<sup>80</sup> but was unable to furnish any evidence that Lincoln was acquainted with the text of Bancroft's lecture. It is interesting that Briggs considers Whitney's recollection to be of importance without examining his central thought that Lincoln considered the Bible to be that "richest store-house" from which to draw. Briggs continues to offer what he considers to be the possibility that Lincoln would have also been interested in another similar and contemporary lecture delivered by Wendell Phillips,<sup>81</sup> stating, "It is difficult to imagine that Lincoln would not have been familiar with Phillips's famous and subtle treatment of these issues in his well-known lecture."<sup>82</sup> There is no doubt that Phillips was a giant in antebellum public life, and Lincoln did have dealings personally with Phillips during his Presidency.<sup>83</sup> It is therefore reasonable to assert that Lincoln was aware of, and had possibly read, Phillips's well-publicised oratory. What is perhaps somewhat curious is the fact that Briggs's quest to understand Lincoln's speeches through his sources should lead him to such ideas, which are at best interesting possibilities, while the very source that Whitney mentions, namely the Bible, is mentioned but not discussed.

Briggs offered the following assessment of Lincoln's lectures:

One is struck immediately by the lecture's heavy reliance on illustrations from the Bible, by its humor, and by its synthesis of Bancroft's optimism and Phillips's mockery of American pretensions.<sup>84</sup>

Briggs then departed from his treatment of Bancroft and Phillips and proceeded to submit an explanation of Herndon's failure to be impressed with Lincoln's Lectures,

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<sup>78</sup> George Bancroft, *The Necessity, the Reality, and the Promise of the Progress of the Human Race* (New York: The New York Historical Society, 1854), 4.

<sup>79</sup> Briggs, *Lincoln's Speeches*, 199.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Wendell Phillips (1811-1884) was a celebrated lecturer, orator and campaigner for the rights of women and the abolition of slavery. James B. Stewart, *Wendell Phillips Liberty's Hero* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986).

<sup>82</sup> Briggs, *Lincoln's Speeches*, 201.

<sup>83</sup> Stewart, *Wendell Phillips*, 246.

<sup>84</sup> Briggs, *Lincoln's Speeches*, 203.



indeed blaming Lincoln's overreliance on the Bible.<sup>85</sup> In making his case, Briggs employs this sentence to describe his assessment of Herndon's reaction, "Herndon's recoil at the almost childish simplicity of his partner's reliance on biblical evidence."<sup>86</sup> It is interesting to note Briggs endorsement of Herndon's scathing comment.

Other modern scholars have also engaged in the presentation of possible Lincoln sources, the evidence for which lies mostly in an argument based on historical proximity. Epstein,<sup>87</sup> for example, considered that Walt Whitman<sup>88</sup> was a major influence on Lincoln's preparation for the Lectures on Discoveries and Inventions. He considers Whitman's style to have been an influence on Lincoln. Epstein does not merely suggest Whitman as an influence; he examines the cadence of Lincoln's language and asserts it is reflective of the poet's.<sup>89</sup> It is worth noting that when Epstein contributed to the Lincoln Forum's 2007 collection, his chapter on Lincoln and Whitman illuminated further this thinking. He submitted that the apparent uniqueness of Whitman's prose is its own evidence as being Lincoln's primary inspiration.<sup>90</sup> Epstein looks at Whitman's masterpiece *Leaves of Grass* and develops his case for its influence upon Lincoln's Lectures. He quotes Lincoln's opening remarks and curiously declares the following:

In 1858 only one writer in America was spinning lines like these; the author of *Leaves of Grass*. Like Whitman Lincoln echoed the King James Bible; Like Whitman Lincoln was making a bible of his own where the will of God gave way before man's motives and ingenuity.<sup>91</sup>

Whitman's piece was written three years<sup>92</sup> before Lincoln's first Lecture, and the fame of the poet would offer some plausibility to Epstein's contention. However, to accept Epstein's argument is to ignore the fact that Lincoln had demonstrated influence from

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Daniel M. Epstein, *Lincoln and Whitman* (New York: Random House, 2005) Kindle edition, Locations 518-530.

<sup>88</sup> Walt Whitman (1819-1892) is now considered to be the inventor of modern American poetry, although his work was not always appreciated during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Jerome Loving, *Walt Whitman: The Song of Himself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); David S. Reynolds, *Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 331 and 448.

<sup>89</sup> Epstein, *Lincoln and Whitman*, Location 524.

<sup>90</sup> Epstein considered that Lincoln had to have been influenced by Whitman, because the stylistic similarities could not have come from anywhere else, "Whitman's ideas and style were remarkable, if for no other reason – in that they were not to be found elsewhere." Simon, Holzer, and Vogel, *Lincoln Revisited*, 130.

<sup>91</sup> Epstein, *Lincoln and Whitman*, Location 524.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., Location 188.

the linguistic cadence and message of the King James Bible long before 1858. In a theory based on linguistics, Epstein suggests that Lincoln “echoed” the Bible in these lectures. The term ‘echo’ would seem an inadequate assessment of Lincoln’s engagement with the Bible on this occasion. He made frequent and deliberate citation, for which he then proceeded to offer chapter and verse references.

Emerson contended for the fact that Lincoln did not use the Bible by accident or on an impulse, “Lincoln’s Lectures were not the result of a passing whim, or a half-hearted composition. It was something to which he gave long and deliberate attention.”<sup>93</sup> Evidence of this ‘deliberate attention’ is found in an account that presents helpful insight into Lincoln’s intentions for the preparation of his Lectures. Lincoln visited Chicago on legal business, and was hosted by Norman Judd.<sup>94</sup> During an evening spent with the Judds he spoke about the wonder of inventions, and Mrs Judd recalled that Lincoln “gave us a short account of all the inventions referred to in the Old Testament, from the time Adam walked the earth until the Bible record ended.”<sup>95</sup> She expressed her surprise at the depth of Lincoln’s knowledge of the Bible. He explained that some discussions with friends had excited his interest in the discovery and use of precious metals and “he went to the Bible to satisfy himself.”<sup>96</sup>

It is interesting to note the observation of historians that Lincoln engaged with the Bible in a practical sense, not limiting his use of the Bible to religious matters. Indeed, Miller believed that the message of the Bible had guided Lincoln in such a way as to influence him in his thoughts on technological expansion and the expansionist trade that would arise as a natural consequence. He added:

Lincolnian statecraft seeks to moderate or limit this advance not through stringent controls, but by a moral teaching that builds on the natural right to oneself and includes a comprehensive doctrine of labor.<sup>97</sup>

In the light of the fact that a considerable proportion of Lincoln’s lectures were built around details gleaned from the scriptures, it is reasonable to submit that both Lectures would have been unrecognisably different if Lincoln had not used the Bible.

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<sup>93</sup> Jason Emerson, *Lincoln the Inventor* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), 38.

<sup>94</sup> Norman Buel Judd (1815-1878) was a lawyer and political associate of Lincoln. President Lincoln appointed him Minister to Prussia. Mark E. Neely, *The Abraham Lincoln Encyclopedia* (New York: Da Capo Press Inc., 1982), 168-169.

<sup>95</sup> Francis F. Browne, *The Every-Day Life of Abraham Lincoln* (Chicago: Blackley-Oswald, 1907), 117.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Eugene F. Miller, “Democratic Statecraft and Technological Advance: Abraham Lincoln’s Reflections on Discoveries and Inventions.” *The Review of Politics*, no. 63 (2001): 485-561.

In this sense the contention is that in Lincoln's Lectures on Discoveries and Inventions his use of the Bible was essential to the text he produced.

### 3.4. The House Divided Speech

During the celebration of Lincoln's bicentennial year, the Organization of American Historians commissioned Princeton's Sean Wilentz to collect *The Best American History Essays on Lincoln*.<sup>98</sup> This compilation of only eleven essays is drawn from the vast array of Lincoln scholarship between 1949 and 2009. Essay number eight is Fehrenbacher's contribution on the House Divided Speech.<sup>99</sup> The Speech's inclusion in such select company is indication of its importance in historical memory. It is interesting to note the importance Fehrenbacher placed upon this work, describing it as part of "a major turning point in Lincoln's career."<sup>100</sup>

Frederick Douglass<sup>101</sup> quoted considerable amounts of the Speech and stated that it was "Well and wisely said."<sup>102</sup> The Speech was crafted to make a strong impression, and as such has on occasions been the subject of varied speculation. Harding observes that the speech is "often interpreted as a catalyst towards sectional conflict,"<sup>103</sup> but he correctly discerns Lincoln's intention to furnish "a reasoned exposition of a moral case rather than an inflammatory appeal to the emotions."<sup>104</sup>

There is universal acceptance of the importance of the Speech, whatever particular inference is extracted. The Speech had an impact upon Lincoln's audience, and upon those who read its newspaper coverage. It was to have far-reaching implications, which would help to shape the remainder of Lincoln's political philosophy and career. Jaffa considers the Speech to be "The axis upon which

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<sup>98</sup> Sean Wilentz, ed. *The Best American History Essays on Lincoln* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

<sup>99</sup> Don E. Fehrenbacher, "The Origins and Purpose of Lincoln's 'House Divided' Speech," in *The Best American History Essays*, ed. Sean Wilentz (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 171.

<sup>100</sup> Fehrenbacher, "The Origins and Purpose," 149.

<sup>101</sup> Frederick Douglass (1817-1895) was the most prominent African American Leader of the Nineteenth Century. He was born a slave and after escaping to freedom he campaigned tirelessly for the abolition of slavery. After initial reticence he became a friend and supporter of President Lincoln. John Stauffer, *Giants: The Parallel Lives of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2008); Charles W. Chesnutt, *Frederick Douglass* (Boston: Small, Maynard and Co., 1899).

<sup>102</sup> Stauffer, *Giants*, 158.

<sup>103</sup> Brian Harding, *American Literature in Context II, 1830-1860* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1982), 232.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

Lincoln's career and thought turned."<sup>105</sup> Charnwood believed the Speech contained "The most carefully prepared words that he had yet spoken, and the most momentous that he had spoken till now or perhaps ever spoke."<sup>106</sup>

### **3.4.1. The political context of the Speech**

The focus of this thesis is the examination of the place of the Bible in Lincoln's political compositions; however, a brief examination of the context and background of the Speech will contribute to an accurate understanding of the essential nature of the Bible's influence. A brief glimpse into the political background to the Speech reveals the single issue that reignited Lincoln's passion for politics, "I was losing my interest in politics, when the repeal of the Missouri Compromise aroused me again."<sup>107</sup>

#### **3.4.1.1. The Kansas-Nebraska Act**

This has been introduced in Section 2.7.1.2. of this thesis. It is however important to state that four years after this legislation aroused Lincoln to deliver his Peoria Address, he was still provoked by it.

#### **3.4.1.2. The Dred Scott decision**

On 6<sup>th</sup> March 1857 Chief Justice Roger B. Taney announced the majority decision of the Supreme Court in the matter of Dred Scott.<sup>108</sup> Taney declared that Scott was not entitled to the benefits of a citizen, because "negroes" could not be considered as such. Taney stated that when America gained independence and constructed its citizenry, black people were thought "so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect."<sup>109</sup> Further to his distasteful reflection, Taney asserted that Congressional attempts to limit the extension of slavery through the Missouri Compromise were in direct violation to the Fifth Amendment's property rights

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<sup>105</sup> Harry V. Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided: An Interpretation of the Issues in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 1.

<sup>106</sup> Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, 109.

<sup>107</sup> Lincoln's brief autobiographical sketch to J.W. Fell written on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1859. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3. 511.

<sup>108</sup> Dred Scott was born around 1800 in Virginia as a slave. Having lived with his master in two States in which slavery was illegal, Scott sought legal recourse to purchase his freedom against the will of his mistress. Scott's case was crushed by the majority decision of the Supreme Court in 1857. He died the following year in 1858. Paul Finkelman, *Dred Scott V. Sandford: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997).

<sup>109</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 199.

clause.<sup>110</sup> Congress did not therefore have the authority to prohibit the extension of slavery into the new territories.<sup>111</sup> This decision, in conjunction with the Kansas-Nebraska Act, meant that slavery could legally spread to all new territories of the Union. Lincoln would use his Speech to attack both Taney's judgment and Douglas' support of it.

### 3.4.1.3. Lincoln's associates

The most immediate political context was the reaction of Lincoln's closest advisors in the days immediately preceding the Speech's delivery. Lincoln was initially reluctant to show his text to anyone while he laboured on it.<sup>112</sup> Herndon interviewed John Armstrong in February 1870. He was able to recall that Lincoln read the Speech to a small group of friends. Their reaction to the House Divided text was emphatic:

Every man among them condemned the speech in Substance and Spirit and especially that section quoted above: they unanimously declared the whole Speech was far too far in advance of the times.<sup>113</sup>

When the possible biblical content in this Speech is considered, this particular background will be of use in determining something of Lincoln's motives for his potentially inflammatory content.

It is worth noting that Lincoln had been considering this phrase in relation to this subject matter for some time. The House Divided quotation appeared in his Campaign Circular from Whig Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1843, "and he whose wisdom surpassed that of all philosophers, has declared that 'a house divided against itself cannot stand.'"<sup>114</sup> The application of the quote on this occasion was concentrated upon the issue of unity within the Whig Party,<sup>115</sup> and was therefore far less potent than Lincoln's use in this Speech. On 18<sup>th</sup> May 1858 Lincoln made some notes, which the CW records as "Fragment of a Speech," these extend for six pages. Towards the end of these notes Lincoln rehearsed some of the language that would become the

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<sup>110</sup> <http://www.usconstitution.net/const>, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

<sup>111</sup> Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*, 131.

<sup>112</sup> In a letter from J. Dubois to Herndon 1865-66, Dubois remembered that Lincoln would not show him the speech and later offered this explanation, "This passage in the speech about the house divided against itself I would not read it to you because I knew you would make me change it ... and I was determined to read it." Wilson and Davis, *Herndon's Informants*, 442.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 1*. 315.

<sup>115</sup> Paul M. Zall, ed. *Lincoln on Lincoln* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 97.

House Divided Speech.<sup>116</sup> Within these remarks Lincoln stated that he had “expressed this belief a year ago.”<sup>117</sup> The editorial footnote<sup>118</sup> states that no speech or letter in 1857 mentions the House Divided phrase, which has led to discussion of a possibly ‘lost speech.’<sup>119</sup> Whether there was a single ‘lost speech’ or simply a position that Lincoln expressed more widely in various public contexts, the fact remains that this verse of the Bible, with all its contextual implications, was forming within Lincoln before his final preparations for the June 1858 address. In the light of the facts considered, it is little wonder that his friends were horrified at that first private preview.<sup>120</sup>

#### **3.4.1.4. The Illinois State Republican Convention**

The immediate historical context of the Speech was the Illinois State Convention. There was a background of political manoeuvring in Illinois and Washington that sought to re-elect Douglas to the Senate unopposed.<sup>121</sup> In the Hall of Representatives in Springfield, on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1858, Lincoln was unanimously confirmed as the Republican nominee for the Senate.<sup>122</sup> When the convention reconvened for the evening session, Lincoln rose to speak at 8pm<sup>123</sup> in an intense and passionate atmosphere. Burlingame quotes a journalist who witnessed Lincoln deliver The Speech:

[U]nanimity is a weak word to express the universal and intense feeling of the convention. *Lincoln!* LINCOLN!! LINCOLN!!! Was the cry everywhere, whenever the senatorship was alluded to. Delegates [...] were alike fierce with enthusiasm, whenever that loved name was breathed.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> “A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe the government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free ... I do not expect the Union to be dissolved. I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other.” Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 452-453.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 452.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, Footnote 9.

<sup>119</sup> Briggs, *Lincoln's Speeches*, 165.

<sup>120</sup> Herndon's interview with John Armstrong, February 1870; Wilson and Davis, *Herndon's Informants*, 575.

<sup>121</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 1. 445-457.

<sup>122</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 2. 136.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 1. 458.

#### **3.4.1.5. Contextual summary**

The Speech was delivered in the context of an important political debate. It was the launch of a campaign between men who were strong ideological opponents, as well as intense personal rivals. Lincoln thought a great deal about the content of the Speech and chose deliver it despite the almost complete condemnation of his confidants. The atmosphere of the hall was passionate and the occasion demanded something rather special. The Speech appears to employ a verse from the Bible that history would assign as its title for the next 145 years.

#### **3.4.2. The place of the Bible in the Speech**

The importance of the following section of the Speech requires an extended quotation.

Mr. PRESIDENT and Gentlemen of the Convention. If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could then better judge what to do, and how to do it. We are now far into the fifth year, since a policy was initiated, with the avowed object, and confident promise, of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only, not ceased, but has constantly augmented. In my opinion, it will not cease, until a crisis shall have been reached, and passed. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved - I do not expect the house to fall -but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery, will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new - North as well as South.<sup>125</sup>

##### **3.4.2.1. The house divided remark**

Lincoln commenced with a denunciation of Douglas' philosophy, claiming that rather than improve what he described as "slavery agitation,"<sup>126</sup> the Kansas-Nebraska Act had actually aggravated the situation. Lincoln remarked, "it will not cease, until a

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<sup>125</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 461-462.

<sup>126</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 461.

crisis shall have been reached, and passed.”<sup>127</sup> This in itself could be considered courageous; it was the very sentiment against which his associates had warned him. Although politicians who threaten war may sometimes rouse naive and base passions in sections of a citizenry, scant appetite existed for talk of civil war in the United States during the 1850’s. The danger for a politician who expressed honestly the possibility of civil war is evidenced in the damage sustained by the presidential aspirations of William H. Seward.<sup>128</sup> Four months after Lincoln’s speech Seward delivered an address,<sup>129</sup> in which he recognised the approaching conflict between the cohabiting systems of ‘slave’ and ‘free’ States. Seward stated, “It is an irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces.”<sup>130</sup> Seward’s speech gained nationwide attention and while it delighted abolitionists, the *New York Times* editorial stance was that their former Governor was calling for Federal intervention to end slavery.<sup>131</sup> He immediately began the unsuccessful process of trying to dilute the implications of his Rochester script.<sup>132</sup>

There is a case for suggesting that when Lincoln carefully selected his subject matter he was neither treading cautiously nor attempting to follow a populist agenda. His fifth sentence contained his forthright prognosis regarding the possible sectional conflict, “In my opinion, it will not cease, until a crisis shall have been reached, and passed.”<sup>133</sup> Having delivered this penetrating remark Lincoln crowned it with this statement reminiscent of the words of Christ, “A house divided against itself cannot stand.”<sup>134</sup>

Lincoln’s text presents this sentence within quotation marks, which would usually indicate a direct quotation. However Lincoln’s words are not an exact transcript of Christ’s statement. In terms of the criteria for identifying the type of biblical reception involved here, Lincoln would appear to be employing a paraphrase.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> William Henry Seward (1801- 1872) served as Governor of New York and then in the US Senate. He was the presumptive Republican nominee for the Presidency in 1860, and was surprisingly beaten by Lincoln. He served as Secretary of State the Lincoln administration and became a valuable ally to the President. <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay>, accessed 5<sup>th</sup> October 2009; John M. Taylor, *William Henry Seward: Lincoln’s Right Hand* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991. Reprint, McLean: Brassey’s, 1996).

<sup>129</sup> Seward spoke on the 25<sup>th</sup> October 1858 in Rochester New York. Ibid., 104-107.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 106-107.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>133</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 461.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.



Corley assertion of a ‘restatement’ of a text would match Lincoln’s language,<sup>135</sup> as does Nicole’s suggestion of a paraphrase consisting of a ‘slight modification.’<sup>136</sup> It is interesting to note Beale’s observation on the Apostle Paul’s reception of the Old Testament. He makes the point that Paul furnished both exact quotations and those he interspersed with his own wording,<sup>137</sup> which is in a sense what Lincoln had done with the phrase in question. The Synoptic Gospels contain versions of Christ’s ‘House Divided’ statement; each will be examined as they appear in canonical order. Lincoln offered, “A house divided against itself cannot stand.”<sup>138</sup> In Matthew 12:25 Christ says, “every kingdom divided against itself is bought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.” In Mark 3:25 he says “a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.” Finally he states in Luke 11:17 “a house divided against a house faileth.” All three texts contain the elements of Lincoln’s remarks, but Luke is the least similar. Matthew does contain the essential wording employed by Lincoln, although the theme of a ‘house’ is simply the final of three illustrative options. Lincoln’s text is most similar to Mark 3:25. In fact the only difference in language is Mark’s “that house,” apart from this Lincoln’s statement is identical.

The possibility that Lincoln may not have utilized this sentence directly from the Bible requires consideration. The phrase is a convenient expression of the position he was seeking to present. It is possible that it was the subject of a sermon, a political speech, or even had simply entered the zeitgeist of the Antebellum. As with so many aspects of the study of Lincoln, speculation based on evidence at hand is the only available form of investigation. There are very few examples of sermons that Lincoln heard personally, and none included this ‘House Divided’ phrase. The many sermons of Lincoln’s youth and Springfield years would probably have included the mention of this text, but this can hardly be considered a definitive possibly as source for the Speech. In terms of the political language or cultural language of period, there is no compelling evidence that this phrase was in common secular use. There is one

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<sup>135</sup> Corley, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 461.

<sup>136</sup> Nicole, “New Testament Use,” 146.

<sup>137</sup> Beale, *Handbook*, Location 821.

<sup>138</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 461.

significant usage of this phrase by a renowned politician. Daniel Webster<sup>139</sup> was an early influence upon Lincoln, and he had used the phrase eleven years previously.

Gentlemen, I believe in party distinctions. I am a party man ... and there are opinions entertained by other parties which I repudiate; but what of all that? If a house be divided against itself, it will fall, and crush everybody in it. We must maintain the government which is over us.<sup>140</sup>

Webster's use of the quotation focused on the potential for collapse brought about by partisan intransigence. It is worth noting that there is no scholarly suggestion that Lincoln drew inspiration from Webster for the Speech. It is possible that this was a source, but the overwhelming weight of opinion points to the Bible as Lincoln's primary resource.

The slight difference between the wording of Lincoln's paraphrase and the Gospels has led to some variation in identification of source. Doris Goodwin states that Lincoln is 'echoing' the Gospels of Matthew and Mark,<sup>141</sup> while Bradford spoke of 'echoes' of Mark 3:25.<sup>142</sup> White, Fornieri, and Briggs submit Matthew 12:25 as the source for the House Divided quotation.<sup>143</sup> There is almost unanimous consensus amongst historians that Lincoln selected his phrase from the Bible, although very little subsequent treatment is offered. This thesis has already examined the fact that Lincoln read the Bible a great deal. It is generally accepted by historians from different persuasions that Lincoln's knowledge of the text was extensive. Noll observes that "It was said of him that, perhaps with some exaggeration, that he knew by heart much of the Psalms, the book of Isaiah, and the entire New Testament."<sup>144</sup> Carwardine is correct in his assessment that "His close acquaintance with the Bible gave him a potent weapon for use on audiences steeped in the Scriptures."<sup>145</sup>

One particular aspect of Lincoln's professional life was that he was meticulous and laborious in the preparation of his public addresses. In the case of this speech

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<sup>139</sup> Daniel Webster (1782-1852) served as a Congressman, US Senator and Secretary of State in the Harrison, Tyler and Fillmore administrations. His oratorical prowess inspired Lincoln. Henry C. Lodge, *Daniel Webster: Ninth Edition* (New York: Boston, Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1887).

<sup>140</sup> Quotation is from a speech delivered at Buffalo, New York, in 1847. Edward Everett, ed. *The Works of Daniel Webster*, Vol. 2. 11<sup>th</sup> Edition (Boston: Little Brown Company, 1858), 546.

<sup>141</sup> Doris K. Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 198.

<sup>142</sup> M.E. Bradford, "The Heresy of Equality: A Reply to Harry Jaffa." In Deutsh and Forniere, *Lincoln's American Dream*, 110.

<sup>143</sup> White, *Lincoln*, 252; Fornieri, *The Language of Liberty*, 209; Briggs, *Lincoln's Speeches*, 168.

<sup>144</sup> Noll, *History of Christianity*, 322.

<sup>145</sup> Carwardine, *Purpose and Power*, 35.

Herndon recalled Lincoln undertook a process of collecting ideas, which was followed by the composition of a number of drafts until he was satisfied.<sup>146</sup> He also stated that Lincoln delivered the speech from a full script. Fehrenbacher pointed out the fact that although the Speech took at least a month to compose, the concept of the House Divided against itself had been formulating in Lincoln's mind for a number of years.<sup>147</sup> It would appear that Lincoln's use of this phrase was the deliberately intended to create an impact upon his audience.

The textual similarity between Lincoln's paraphrase and Mark 3:25, coupled with the overwhelming observation of scholars strongly suggests that this is an example of Lincoln using the Bible to reinforce his political message.

#### **3.4.2.2. The contextual implications of the text**

If it is correct to assert that Lincoln had deliberately chosen this phrase from the Bible, then it is also possible that doing so would invoke thoughts of the biblical context thereof. There is no accurate means for establishing the degree of Bible knowledge amongst Lincoln's audience. This thesis will revisit the universal contention of historians that a considerable percentage of Lincoln's contemporaries were Christians and acquainted with the Bible. This fact alone does not prove that all those who heard Lincoln deliver the Speech shared his notable command of scripture. It is nevertheless reasonable to accept the possibility that if Lincoln selected a well-known phrase from the Gospels, some of his listeners would know something of the surrounding verses. Herndon recorded Lincoln's explanation for his selection of the Bible's 'House Divided' phrase,

I want to use some universally well known figure expressed in simple language as universally well known, that may strike home to the minds of men in order to raise them up to the perils of the times.<sup>148</sup>

Lincoln here makes the point that he wanted to create a decisive impact upon his audience, and he considered that he could achieve this with language that was 'universally well known.' It would seem that Lincoln's expectation was that his audience would recognise his chosen phrase. Indeed Briggs submits that Lincoln's audience would have been largely acquainted with the context of the 'House Divided'

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<sup>146</sup> Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 2.* 66.

<sup>147</sup> Don E. Fehrenbacher, *Prelude to Greatness: Lincoln in the 1850's* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1962), 83.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

text, “it is unlikely that, speaking among his Bible-reading neighbours, he could have cleanly detached such a well-known passage from its source.”<sup>149</sup> It is important to note that although most scholars offer the briefest of commentary on this matter, the majority of historians who do comment of the House Divided phrase consider that the biblical context of the verse would have been appreciated to a reasonable degree. It is interesting to consider the thought of Brown who reflects upon the hermeneutical implication of a quotation, “by citing a brief part of another text or even alluding to it, an author may be evoking the entire context, message, or story of that other text.”<sup>150</sup> Indeed Thiselton suggests the importance of contextual appreciation: “Without understanding the situation behind the text, the meaning may escape us.”<sup>151</sup> The question of the appreciation of context is ultimately inconclusive, but it is not unreasonable to submit some of Lincoln’s audience, and certainly Lincoln himself will have understood the implication of his remarks.

A brief survey of the verse from which Lincoln had derived his phrase reveals some rather stark comparisons. Mark 3:11-21 spoke of Jesus’ healing ministry but also of exorcism, as well as the commissioning of his disciples to do likewise. Mark 3:22 provides the issue to which Jesus actually responds, with his House Divided phrase, “And the scribes ... said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.” The result of Jesus’ ministry of exorcism involved personal freedom and physical healing for the individuals concerned. The substance of Jesus’ rebuttal of the Pharisaic accusation is simply that Satan would not destroy his own work. The context for Lincoln’s remark is the Bible’s perspective of the clash between good and evil. Lincoln chose this moment, “the most important address of his political career,”<sup>152</sup> to quote a powerful Bible verse, lifted from a discourse on the struggle between good and evil. Jesus was addressing adversary who had failed to grasp the foolishness of their argument. Through invocation of this biblical context Lincoln was suggesting that he would be doing the same in the forthcoming campaign against Douglas and the devotees of Popular Sovereignty.

The two opposites in the potentially divided house of Mark 3 are Jesus and Satan. By implication the message is that a house cannot be sustained with the

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<sup>149</sup> Briggs, *Lincoln’s Speeches*, 168.

<sup>150</sup> Brown, *Scripture as Communication*, Location 2248.

<sup>151</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 22.

<sup>152</sup> White, *Lincoln*, 251.

cohabitation of good and evil. The divided house of Lincoln's Antebellum America cannot be considered to be represented by two honourable, but opposing points of view. That may have been the case with a political statement about a need for one direction as opposed to the other. However Lincoln's inclusion of the Mark 3:25 House Divided phrase deliberately infused the speech with powerful unspoken connotations, which presented one argument as good and one as evil. Those who knew the context would have understood that by implication, Douglas and his followers were being compared to the Pharisees. Lincoln had elevated the debate to a confrontation between good and evil.

Lincoln developed his arguments by expressing his belief that the institution of slavery was either to be doomed by its effective opponents, or it would eventually spread throughout the existing and future States and Territories of the Union.<sup>153</sup> Lincoln continued by presenting a damning indictment on the insidious nature of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, culminating in an evaluation of the Dred Scott decision.

#### **3.4.2.3. Live dog, dead lion**

The Speech continued with an attack on the nature, as well the specifics, of Douglas' Popular Sovereignty doctrine. A characteristically 'white supremacist' Democrat position drove the nature of Douglas' policy. It will be prudent to make brief reference to the fact that the Democratic Party of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was not the inclusive and liberal bastion of President Obama. Even after the War's conclusion, the Democratic Party continued to be the party of segregation, anti-miscegenation, and even white supremacy.<sup>154</sup> A considerable percentage of politicians had rather obnoxious views on racial integration in the 1850s, and Douglas as a leading Democratic publically expressed what would now be considered extremely unattractive racist views.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> "Either the opponents of slavery, will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new – North as well as South." Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 461-462.

<sup>154</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 101.

<sup>155</sup> Douglas attacked Lincoln's anti-slavery position thus, "Mr. Lincoln, following the example and lead of all little Abolition orators ... reads from the Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal, and then asks, 'How can you deprive the negro of that equality which God and the Declaration of Independence awards him?' Now I do not believe that the Almighty ever intended the negro to be the equal of the white man. If he did he has been a long time demonstrating the fact. For thousands of years the negro has been a race upon the earth and during all that time, in all latitudes and climates,

Despite his strong personal views on the virtue of slavery and the inferiority of African American people, Douglas chose to articulate what Lincoln described as a “care not” policy.<sup>156</sup> Douglas’ considered the issue at hand was political, not moral. This was not a matter of whether slavery was right or not; the situation concerned Popular Sovereignty. Winger correctly asserts that, “He (Douglas) wanted to avoid letting moral claims illuminate, or inflame, the debate.”<sup>157</sup> Winger describes the political climate of Douglas’ thinking as “liberal contract theory.”<sup>158</sup> Douglas looked to the weight of public opinion and agencies such as the Supreme Court as the final arbiters on policy. Lincoln used the opportunity of the conference to speak against this Liberal Contract Theory, and by implication insisted that not caring, and waiting to see what States and Territories decide to do, was unacceptable.

Lincoln then submitted that the fingerprints of four men could be seen in the passage and public management of the Dred Scott decision. He suggested something of a conspiracy between Douglas, Chief Justice Taney, retiring President Franklin Pierce, and newly inaugurated President James Buchanan,<sup>159</sup> although Lincoln does admit a degree of speculative license in this assessment.<sup>160</sup> Lincoln drew attention to the fact that some Republicans had suggested that Douglas’ opposition to the ‘Lecompton Constitution’<sup>161</sup> made it expedient for the wider Republican agenda to allow Douglas to stand unopposed. He then discussed the recent political events, as discussed in the previous three paragraphs. There is a slight sarcastic tone as Lincoln concedes “that he is a very great man, and the largest of us very small ones.”<sup>162</sup> Douglas was known for his short stature,<sup>163</sup> and Lincoln’s words were a caricature of the fact that he was physically taller,<sup>164</sup> although Douglas’ reputation dwarfed him.

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wherever he has wandered or been taken, he has been inferior to the race which he there met. He belongs to an inferior race and must always occupy an inferior position.” William Gardner, *The Life of Stephen A. Douglas* (Whitefish: Kessinger Publications, 1905), 89-90.

<sup>156</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 464.

<sup>157</sup> Stewart L. Winger, *Lincoln, Religion, and Romantic Cultural Politics* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), 144.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>159</sup> “Stephen, Franklin, Roger and James, for instance – and when we see these timbers joined together, and see they exactly make the frame of a house.” Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol.2. 465.

<sup>160</sup> “We cannot absolutely know that all these exact adaptations are the result of preconcert.” *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> In 1857 moves were made by the new settlers to secure Statehood for the Territory of Kansas. Douglas surprisingly broke ranks with his party’s President and effectively allowed Kansas’ acceptance into the Union as a “Free State.” John M. Murrin et al., *Liberty, Equality, Power: A History of the People, Concise Edition* (Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2009), 368-369.

<sup>162</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 467.

<sup>163</sup> Douglas became known as the “Little Giant.” Gardner, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 52.

<sup>164</sup> Lincoln was, in his own words, “Height, six feet, four inches, nearly; lean in flesh, weighing, on average, one hundred and eighty pounds.” Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3. 512.

Lincoln set out the rationale for his tackling such a formidable opponent as Douglas. He anchored his argument upon the quotation from the Bible.

Despite the fact that Douglas bestrode the politics of the late Antebellum, Lincoln believed he was a better candidate for the times. In making a slight joke at his own expense, Lincoln stated, “a living dog is better than a dead lion.”<sup>165</sup> He offers this text within quotation marks and the wording is an exact transcript of Ecclesiastes 9:4. This can therefore be treated as a direct biblical quotation. Whether Lincoln specifically selected from his own Bible reading, or whether it was a phrase that he gleaned from a more general source is almost impossible to say. It would however be an interesting coincidence that in one speech Lincoln furnished two strong references to Bible verses without fully appreciating what he was doing. This would be even more remarkable when considering the point that will be reinforced in Section 7.8, that it was not usual for a senior political figure to make such specific reference to the Bible. It is therefore feasible to submit that the source of this phrase was the Old Testament.

It is interesting to note the remarks of a commentator who was contemporaneous to Lincoln. Although the product of an English author, the following work belonged to the Library of Princeton Theological Department. Plumptre embroidered the points of Lincoln’s chosen text with quotations from Sophocles and Euripides. Plumptre explains the comparison between the dog and the lion in the Scriptures:

The point of the proverb lies, of course, in the Eastern estimate of the dog as the vilest of all animals (1 Sam. Xvii.43; Ps lxix. 6; 2 Kings vii. 13; Matt vii. 6, xv. 26; Rev. Xxii. 15, et al.) while the lion, both Jew and Greek, was, as the King of Beasts (Prov. Xxx.30), the natural symbol of human sovereignty.<sup>166</sup>

The interpretation is further expressed by Stuart in his 1852 work, “for even a living animal, although contemptible, is better than the king of beasts when dead.”<sup>167</sup>

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Johannsen submits the following contrasting view of Senator Douglas, “He stood only five feet four inches tall. A massive head, broad shoulders, full chest and short, stubby legs.” Hence his nick name the ‘little giant.’ Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 4.

<sup>165</sup> Basler, *Collected Work*, Vol. 2. 467.

<sup>166</sup> Edward H. Plumptre, *Ecclesiastes, or, The Preacher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1887), 136.

<sup>167</sup> Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (New York: G.P. Putman, 1851), 248.

Lincoln employed two combined qualities that would become characteristic, namely the ability to be self-effacing and his keen sense of humour. Lincoln's use of Ecclesiastes 9:4 compared himself with the most 'contemptible' of all beasts, and Douglas with the noblest. Lincoln's assertion was that despite Douglas' noble credentials his Kansas-Nebraska Act had rendered him "if not a dead lion for this work, then at least a toothless one."<sup>168</sup> Lincoln uses the power of this Biblical wisdom to launch his demolition of the legitimacy of support for Douglas as the candidate<sup>169</sup> who cannot prevent a possible revival of the African Slave Trade.<sup>170</sup> Lincoln's assessment was that Douglas' Popular Sovereignty position had rendered him ineffective, despite his rather commendable stance against the Lecompton Constitution. Lincoln's choice of the Bible verse as the anchor of his Speech served to provide contrast with Douglas' amoral position on slavery. Fornieri suggests that Lincoln is offering the chance to make a moral, even godly decision as opposed to entering into an "unholy alliance with Douglas, who was utterly indifferent to its evil and spread."<sup>171</sup>

Hay and Nicolay express the view of most scholars that Lincoln's choice of language was neither random or inconsequential, "Every word of it was written, every sentence tested ... It was no ordinary oration, but, in the main, an argument, as sententious and axiomatic as if made to a bench of jurists."<sup>172</sup> They also considered that Lincoln, "showed a lawyer's concern with verbal exactitude."<sup>173</sup> The two major points of the Speech were firstly that the Republic could not continue half slave and half free, and secondly that Douglas' re-election to the Senate had to be robustly opposed. These points were illustrated and given authority by Lincoln's skilful and careful use of the Bible in the House Divided Speech.

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<sup>168</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 467.

<sup>169</sup> "How can he oppose the advances of slavery? He don't care nothing about it. His avowed mission is impressing the 'public heart' to care nothing about it. A leading Douglas Democratic newspaper thinks Douglas' superior talent will be needed to resist the revival of the African slave trade. Does Douglas believe an effort to revive that trade is approaching? He has not said so. Does he really think so? But if it is, how can he resist it? For years he has laboured to prove it a sacred right of white men to take negro slaves into the new territories. Can he possibly show that it is less a sacred right to buy them where they can be bought cheapest? And, unquestionably they can be bought cheaper in Africa than in Virginia." *Ibid.*, 467-468.

<sup>170</sup> The importation of African Slaves to the USA was outlawed in the year 1807. James A. Rawley and Stephen D. Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History: Revised Edition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 362.

<sup>171</sup> Fornieri, *Language of Liberty*, 209.

<sup>172</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 2. 136.

<sup>173</sup> Harding, *American Literature*, 232.



### 3.4.3. The aftermath of the Speech

The most immediate aftermath was that the Speech was well received by the delegates at the Illinois Republican Convention.<sup>174</sup> The Speech received extensive press coverage, especially in Illinois.<sup>175</sup> The most immediate aftermath was that the Speech was well received by the audience at the Illinois Republican Convention.<sup>176</sup> Burlingame records reaction from Springfield's *Illinois State Journal*, which was published on the 18<sup>th</sup> June 1858.<sup>177</sup> The report reflected the Speech as "able, logical, and most eloquent."<sup>178</sup> This was a sympathetic reporting from publications with Republican loyalties.

The concerns of Lincoln's associates and friends have already been noted, regarding the potentially inflammatory nature of the Speech's text. One supporter considered that Lincoln's decision to state his position so strongly was "imprudent and impolitic."<sup>179</sup> Herndon reflected upon the concerns that he and the other associates had voiced. He expressed his assessment that the reaction to the Speech actually exceeded their already considerable concerns, "Lincoln had now created in reality a more profound impression than he or his friends anticipated."<sup>180</sup> Herndon reported the polarizing effect of the Speech that made moderate Republicans nervous and delighted Democrats, who considered their position to be the more popular.<sup>181</sup> Lincoln received feedback from supporters who had read the Speech in the print media:

Numbers of his friends distant from Springfield, on reading his speech, wrote him censorious letters; one well-informed co-worker predicted his defeat, charging it to the first ten lines of the speech.<sup>182</sup>

Herndon's footnote for this quotation attributed the comment to Lincoln's friend Leonard Swett.<sup>183</sup> The first 'ten lines' that Swett was concerned about was the section built around the House Divided remark. He appeared to believe that this would result in Lincoln's electoral defeat. The Speech contained potentially divisive and

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<sup>174</sup> White, *Lincoln*, 257.

<sup>175</sup> "Across Illinois Republican journals gave 'A House Divided' front-page exposure, and some country editors even brought it out in a pocket edition." Oates, *Malice Toward None*, 144.

<sup>176</sup> White, *Lincoln*, 257.

<sup>177</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1*. 465.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> Cuomo, and Holzer, *Lincoln on Democracy*, 105.

<sup>180</sup> Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 2*. 69.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 69-70.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 70, Footnote 1.

controversial material throughout. It was not however Lincoln's suggestions of a conspiracy in the Dred Scott decision, or his suggestions of the possibility of a resurrected African Slave Trade that disconcerted Swett. His primary concern was what he believed to be Lincoln's incendiary biblical paraphrase. Confronted by these concerns Lincoln refused to be deflected from the convictions he expressed in the Speech:

If I had to draw a pen across my record, and erase my whole life from sight, and I had one poor gift or choice left as to what I should save from the wreck, I should choose that speech and leave it to the world unerasd.<sup>184</sup>

Certainly the danger of misinterpreting Lincoln's warning of civil war as a call to arms existed, although a careful reading of the House Divided text reveals the true character of Lincoln's case. In the work of modern historians the Speech is almost universally referred to as the 'House Divided Speech.' However in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century it was referred to as the 'House Divided Against Itself Speech.' In fact all of the documentary evidence collected by Herndon is to this effect.<sup>185</sup> The slightly longer title furnishes a more accurate reflection of Lincoln's intentions.

Lincoln did not state that a divided house was an insurmountable problem. His central concern was a house divided "against itself." Divisions of opinion and belief could exist within the context of mutual respect for the other's right to hold such opinions. His contention was that destruction would result in that which divides against its very self. Lincoln was warning against, and not instigating, such destruction. Despite Lincoln's thorough formulation of his Speech there was an initial degree of public misunderstanding. He sought opportunity for clarification through a letter addressed to the editor of the *Chicago Daily Democratic Press*,<sup>186</sup> "I am much mortified that any part of it should be construed so differently from anything intended by me."<sup>187</sup> In spite of Lincoln's meticulous efforts, his Speech was viewed as provocative, due in the most part to misunderstanding of the finer points of his proposition. One of the most valuable assessments of the impact of the Speech is to be

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> In *Herndon's Informants* all the references to this address refer to it as "The House divided Against Itself Speech." Wilson and Davis, *Herndon's Informants*, 162; L. Swett on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1866, 162; C.C. Brown interview 1865-1866, 438; J. Dubois interview 1865-1866, 442; J. Armstrong interview February 1870, 575.

<sup>186</sup> This publication is now *The Chicago Tribune*.

<sup>187</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 471.

demonstrated in the subsequent Lincoln-Douglas debates of the same year, which will be examined in Chapter Four of this thesis.

#### **3.4.4. Conclusion to the Speech**

This was the most important political speech that Lincoln had delivered thus far. The weight of his contention was constructed upon what has been suggested to be a familiar verse from the Bible. Lincoln's use of the Bible evoked comparison between Douglas' position and the work of Satan's, "binding the strong man" to plunder his goods, not to mention thoughts of unforgivable sin. The weight of the words of Christ in their original context would have resonated with nearly all who heard and read this courageous speech.

If Lincoln had not chosen to use the Bible as he did, the House Divided Speech would have lost more than its title. The convictions that propelled Lincoln back into frontline political activity were articulated powerfully with the text of the Bible. In recognizing the importance of the explosive nature of Lincoln's Speech, Thomas correctly identifies the central reason for its potency, "this was one of Lincoln's most historic speeches, owing largely to his use of the Biblical phrase."<sup>188</sup> Other phrases or concepts could have been lifted from the speech to serve as a title, but the Biblical quote is the phrase universally ascribed. Without both the Old and New Testament quotations Lincoln's speech would have lacked the required impact to launch a credible campaign against a dominant opponent in Douglas.

Lincoln stated, "I believe that this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free ... I do not expect the house to fall – but I do expect it will cease to be divided."<sup>189</sup> The events of the War would vindicate Lincoln's prognosis. The "house" could not continue to bury its head in the sand created by the division of ideology regarding chattel slavery, and the Northern triumph ensured that the Union, or the House, did stand. The strength of purpose which President Lincoln's leadership gave, demonstrated the fact that these two quoted sentences were not only his expectation but his heartfelt desire. For Lincoln the Bible is not his only source of inspiration, but it is certainly the most authoritative. In the employment of the

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<sup>188</sup> Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*, 182.

<sup>189</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 461.

Gospel's verse, "Lincoln's authority is thus, by association, elevated to the level of the hieratic."<sup>190</sup> Lincoln's text had a profound effect on future generations:

A widespread familiarity with the King James text, partly propagated by the nation's schools, gave the United States a shared text from which to speak and anchor a common memory. Lincoln could call the nation away from being a house divided.<sup>191</sup>

In light of both immediate reaction, and the overwhelming contention of historical memory, it is reasonable to submit that Lincoln's use of the Bible in this speech can be considered essential to its success.

### **3.5. In conclusion to Chapter Three**

In this chapter Lincoln's solitary Congressional term has been examined. In his most important political venture to date, Lincoln kept himself strictly to a political presentation. This period produced no memorable speeches or even quotations. This furnishes an example of the fact that Lincoln did not use the Bible all the time, and there is possibly a case for saying that as a Congressman he was dealing with issues which he judged not to have required biblical citation. There followed a period of concentration upon the prosperity of the Lincoln and Herndon Law practice. This was interrupted by Senator Douglas' Kansas-Nebraska Act, which inflamed Lincoln's political passions and rekindled his political career. This period was graced by the Peoria Address, which contained some brief but influential and elegant use of the Bible. The Lectures on Discoveries and Inventions were delivered in 1858 and 1859, and were constructed around the information and texts of the Bible. The Bible would feature more prominently than ever in a speech which would become one of Lincoln's most celebrated efforts, an inflammatory offering which is universally remembered as the House Divided Speech. The progress of Lincoln's career would see him elected as the President less than 30 months after his House Divided Speech. The political values and spiritual conviction of this Speech would provide a major portion of the motivation for Lincoln's ultimately successful prosecution of the War.

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<sup>190</sup> Deutsh and Forniere, *Lincoln's American Dream*, 110.

<sup>191</sup> Paul C. Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777-1880* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999), 141.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SPRINGFIELD LAWYER TO PRESIDENT-ELECT

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter will focus on three remarkable but turbulent years for Lincoln. In 1858 he would indulge in the exhilaration of a major political campaign, only to experience crushing disappointment. Within two years he would be elected President of the United States. This rich period of the Lincoln narrative provides some memorable political oratory: the Lincoln-Douglas Debates,<sup>1</sup> the Cooper Union Speech and his Springfield Farewell Address. These very different experiences helped introduce Lincoln to the American electorate. They also contain some very engaging examples of the way in which Lincoln would increasingly employ the text and message of the Bible in his political writings and speeches.

#### 4.2. The campaign for the Senate

In Section 2.8.1.3 of this thesis, examination is offered of the rivalry between Lincoln and Senator Stephen Douglas. The overwhelming expectation was that Douglas would be returned to the US Senate, to continue his anticipated bid for the Presidency in 1860. Lincoln received the Republican nomination to run against him for the Senate. Inflamed by the effects and potential ramifications of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Dred Scott decision, Lincoln accepted the nomination with his House Divided speech and the campaign commenced. The contest between Lincoln and Douglas would in many ways prove to be pivotal in the destiny of the United States<sup>2</sup> and fortuitous to the political career of Abraham Lincoln, whose reputation was given national recognition.<sup>3</sup>

Elections for the Illinois State Legislature were held on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1858,<sup>4</sup> and the new Legislature would elect Illinois' Senator on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1859.<sup>5</sup> Despite

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<sup>1</sup> The seven debates between Lincoln and Senator Douglas are contained in Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce Chadwick, *1858: Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S. Grant and the War They Failed to See* (Naperville: Sourcebooks Inc., 2008), x.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>4</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 1. 545.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 550.

the fact that the electorate had no direct say in the result of the Senate campaign, both candidates campaigned widely in order to influence the Legislature through popular reaction to their efforts. White illuminates the extent to which this campaign was part of the first wave of modern and extensive campaign itineraries; such movement would have been impossible a decade earlier.<sup>6</sup> He also mentions the valuable national public exposure gained by both candidates.<sup>7</sup> During this campaign, Lincoln delivered 63 speeches and Douglas more than 100.<sup>8</sup> The effort and expense of this campaign were clearly targeted towards the general public, which appears at first glance to be a waste when the ultimate decision rested upon the shoulders of the members of the State Legislature. The campaign was meant to inspire votes for party representation for the Legislature, who would in turn make one of their first official duties the election of their candidate to the Senate. When the campaign was over, Lincoln reflected on the importance of the national platform it provided:

I am glad I made the late race. It gave me a hearing on the great and durable question of the age, which I could have had in no other way ... I believe I have made some marks, which will tell for the cause of civil liberty long after I am gone.<sup>9</sup>

#### **4.2.1. The Lincoln-Douglas Debates**

The most visible highlight of the campaign focused attention on seven<sup>10</sup> public debates, one in each congressional district of Illinois.<sup>11</sup> The year 2008 was the Sesquicentennial of the Lincoln/Douglas debates and they were again the subject of extensive discussion. For example, in February 2008 Guelzo published his contribution to the field claiming that these debates helped to define the direction of the United States.<sup>12</sup> The debates are important in the narrative of Lincoln's rise to power and provided extraordinary national exposure for him.

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<sup>6</sup> "Lincoln travelled 3,400 miles by train, 600 miles by carriage, and 350 miles by boat for a total of 4,350 miles. Douglas travelled 5,277 miles." White, *Lincoln*, 273.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3. 339.

<sup>10</sup> The Debates took place in Ottawa, Freeport, Jonesboro, Charleston, Galesburg, Quincy, and Alton. Paul M. Angle, ed. *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 88.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>12</sup> Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln and Douglas: The Debates that Defined America* (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., 2008).

In the summer of that turbulent year, as America slid perilously closer to the brink of disunion, two Illinois politicians seized center stage and held the national spotlight for two extraordinary months.<sup>13</sup>

These debates “have receded into folklore”<sup>14</sup> and, as Zarefsky observes, the debates became an important part of Lincoln’s contribution:

The debates are widely regarded both as a milestone on Lincoln’s career and as the model for what political argument ought to be, the standard from which we somehow have fallen and the ideal that we should seek to restore.<sup>15</sup>

The campaign proved to be something of a groundbreaking political process, due to the extended coverage devoted to the debates by the popular press.<sup>16</sup> The impact Lincoln had would have been significant because of the high level of political engagement in the Antebellum. Gienapp considered that the context for the Lincoln-Douglas debates involved a much more politically engaged populace, stating that between 1840 and 1860 in America “Politics seemed to enter into everything.”<sup>17</sup> Carwardine describes the debates as “a remarkable example of sustained participatory politics”<sup>18</sup> and Winger asserts, “the debates thrust him into the national limelight and set the stage for his election in 1860.”<sup>19</sup> Barton considered the effectiveness of Lincoln’s debate performances and concluded that it was the message as much as the man that gained notoriety.

Debates which made him known throughout the nation as a champion of freedom in the territories, and of the faith that the nation could not forever endure half slave and half free.<sup>20</sup>

The debates began in August and did not conclude until October; public interest was feverish.

Lincoln issued the challenge to debate, but Douglas selected most of the terms and the venues.<sup>21</sup> The format for the debates began with an hour-long speech

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<sup>13</sup> Holzer, *Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, 1.

<sup>14</sup> David Zarefsky, *Lincoln Douglas and Slavery: In the Crucible of Public Debate* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), ix.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> “The debates not only riveted the eyewitnesses who packed town squares and fairgrounds to hear them in Illinois, but also captured the attention of readers around the country who devoured every word in newspaper reprints.” Holzer, *Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, xi.

<sup>17</sup> Stephen E. Maizlish and John J. Kushma, eds. *Essays on American Antebellum Politics 1840-1860* (Arlington: University of Texas, 1982), 15.

<sup>18</sup> Carwardine, *Lincoln*, 75.

<sup>19</sup> Winger, *Lincoln, Religion*, 15.

<sup>20</sup> William E. Barton, *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: D.H. Doran Co., 1920), 73.

from the first speaker, followed by the second speaker's 90-minute rebuttal, then the first speaker returned for a 30-minute rejoinder.<sup>22</sup> The prospect of these two old rivals locking political horns was particularly intriguing, as Herndon reflected: "History furnishes few characters whose lives and careers were so nearly parallel as those of Lincoln and Douglas."<sup>23</sup> It is worthy of note that Lincoln's career would benefit from exposure to a nationwide audience, which his rival had been accustomed to for some years. Miller considered that Lincoln's strategy was in some sense an arrogation of Douglas' fame, to enhance his own.<sup>24</sup> These debates proved to be a vital stage in Lincoln's political journey, and it is significant that again Lincoln's use of the Bible was part of these exchanges.

#### **4.2.2. The place of the Bible in the Debates**

There is plethora of possibilities for discussion regarding these debates; however, the issue at hand is the place of the Bible in Lincoln's political compositions. The importance of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, both in the minds of the 1858 American public and in historical memory, is important in assessing the place of the Bible in Lincoln's political speeches and writing. It is interesting to note that the CW furnishes complete transcripts of both Lincoln's and Douglas' texts from all seven debates.

##### **4.2.2.1. The extent of Lincoln's use of the Bible**

The volume percentage of potentially biblical material in Lincoln's debate texts is comparatively small. Lincoln spoke fewer times than Douglas,<sup>25</sup> but he still managed to deliver a total of 63,950 words during the debates.<sup>26</sup> In such a lengthy body of work, with such new exposure to a national audience, the question might reasonably be posed as to why Lincoln did not make more expansive use of the Bible.

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<sup>21</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 2. 145.

<sup>22</sup> Harold Holzer, ed. *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates: The First Complete, Unexpurgated Text* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), xxi

<sup>23</sup> Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 2. 72.

<sup>24</sup> William Lee Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues: An Ethical Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 330.

<sup>25</sup> During the Seven debates of the 1858 campaign for the Douglas spoke a total of 67,378 words. The word count for Douglas' speeches is the count for his contributions at all seven debates with Lincoln. The word count does not include the material in brackets and the interjections of others during his address. The word count is calculated from, Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3.

<sup>26</sup> The word count does not include the material in brackets and the interjections of others during Lincoln's debate speeches. The word count is calculated from, *Ibid.*



There are at least three reasonable responses to the above question. Firstly, one fact that will be demonstrated in the development of this thesis is that Lincoln was an original thinker and that, although not erratic, his intellectual process could be difficult to predict. He did use the Bible at essential moments and in doing so sought to demonstrate that aspects of his political message could be traced to the most authoritative of sources. There were occasions in which he did not engage with scripture.<sup>27</sup> Secondly, a claim can be made that Lincoln was effective in his use of the Bible because he was measured and careful in this matter. He would sometimes use the Bible when presenting a new concept to the public; this was certainly the case in his Peoria Address<sup>28</sup> and House Divided Speech.<sup>29</sup> In the 1858 debates, Lincoln was reinforcing rather than introducing policy and political philosophy.<sup>30</sup> In fact, Carwardine also considered that Lincoln used the seven lengthy debates to reiterate the position of his June 1858 speech: “This, his House Divided Speech, provided the strategic anchor for his whole campaign.”<sup>31</sup> Thirdly, the case has already been presented that the significance of material is not always commensurate with its volume percentage.<sup>32</sup>

#### **4.2.2.2. The place of the Bible in each debate**

In order to consider the way in which Lincoln reiterated and defended his use of the Bible in the articulation of his political philosophy, it will be prudent to examine each of the seven debates with Douglas. The value of the debates to the topic of this research is in part due to the way in which Douglas took the initiative in attacking Lincoln, by means of extensive quotation from Lincoln’s previous use of the Bible.

##### **4.2.2.2.1. The Ottawa Debate**

In the first debate in Ottawa, Illinois, on the 21<sup>st</sup> August 1858, Douglas spoke twice, to Lincoln’s once. Douglas was slightly more than halfway through his opening

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<sup>27</sup> Examples of important occasions when Lincoln chose not to use the Bible include his texts during his single congressional term 1847-1849. Another notable occasion was on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1852. Lincoln delivered a lengthy eulogy in honour of Henry Clay, whom Lincoln admired greatly. The occasion of a Eulogy would have provided an opportunity to include selections of scripture, and yet Lincoln was economical, to say the least. *Ibid.*, *Vol. 2*. 121-132.

<sup>28</sup> Lincoln’s use of the Bible in his Peoria address is considered in Section 2.8. of this thesis.

<sup>29</sup> Lincoln’s use of the Bible in his House Divided address is considered in Section 3.4. of this thesis.

<sup>30</sup> Carwardine, *Purpose and Power*, 76.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> The issue of percentage was discussed in Section 2.8.2.1. of this thesis.

address when he selected a quotation from Lincoln's House Divided speech. Douglas accurately reproduced the entire section of Lincoln's argument, which contended that slavery would eventually disappear because the Union could not continue to tolerate it.<sup>33</sup> It is interesting to note that, as he was about to speak, Lincoln handed his coat to one of his supporters and was reported to have said: "Hold my coat while I stone Stephen."<sup>34</sup> Lincoln's request is reminiscent of the account in Acts 7:58-59, "the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen." Lincoln's elements of the holding of the garment and the phrase 'stone Stephen,' would suggest a biblical paraphrase of Acts 7:58-59. Indeed Nicole's contention is relevant to Lincoln's phraseology, namely that such similarity of language is an indication of the author's intention to be identified with a source text, in this case the Bible.<sup>35</sup> Macartney made the point that Lincoln's comment was received with laughter because generally people understood the Biblical allusion.<sup>36</sup>

Lincoln responded during his debate address by repeating the phrase 'House Divided' four times<sup>37</sup> in succession to rebuke Douglas. Lincoln questioned whether the Senator had actually answered at all the point that "a house divided against itself cannot stand." Does the judge say it can stand? I don't know whether he does or not."<sup>38</sup> Lincoln's use of the Bible was attacked by Douglas, and yet became an effective tool for Lincoln as he sought to expose the weakness of his opponent's position.

#### 4.2.2.2.2. The Freeport Debate

In the second debate held at Freeport, Illinois, on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1858, Lincoln spoke twice to Douglas' once. In his speech Douglas again quoted the entire House Divided section from Lincoln's June 1858 speech, word for word, exactly as he had done in

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<sup>33</sup> Douglas quoted thus from Lincoln's House Divided Speech, "In *my* opinion, it *will* not cease, until a *crisis* shall have been reached, and passed. 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half *slave* and half *free*. I do not expect the Union to be *dissolved* -- I do not expect the house to *fall* -- but I *do* expect it will cease to be divided. It will become *all* one thing or *all* the other. Either the *opponents* of slavery, will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its *advocates* will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in *all* the States, *old* as well as *new* -- *North* as well as *South*. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3. 7-8.

<sup>34</sup> Clarence E.N. Macartney, *Lincoln and the Bible* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), 5.

<sup>35</sup> Nicole, "New Testament Use," 137.

<sup>36</sup> Macartney, *Lincoln and the Bible*, 6.

<sup>37</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, 18-19.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

Ottawa.<sup>39</sup> Lincoln proceeded to dismiss his opponent's obsession with the Speech: "I have so often tried to answer what he is always saying on that melancholy theme, that I almost turn with disgust from the discussion – from the repetition of an answer to it."<sup>40</sup> Lincoln asked his audience to examine his House Divided speech that he was certain was familiar to them, "and see whether it contains any of those 'bugaboos' which frighten Judge Douglas."<sup>41</sup> It is worth noting that in his answer Lincoln refrained from actual quotation of the 'House Divided' phrase.<sup>42</sup> This continues to be a unique aspect of Lincoln's use of the Bible in his political compositions, because his opponent is directing his own words against him. This does, however, offer some indication of the impact of Lincoln's use of the Bible that so enraged his powerful adversary.

#### 4.2.2.2.3. The Jonesboro Debate

During the third debate at Jonesboro, Illinois, on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1858, Douglas took the podium twice and Lincoln once. In Jonesboro, Douglas was in what Morris described as "...safe territory for Douglas and the Democrats."<sup>43</sup> He noted that a recent Republican candidate won "...less than 4 per cent of the vote at the last presidential election."<sup>44</sup> In his first address, Douglas again took the opportunity to aggressively pursue Lincoln's views expressed in the House Divided speech. Douglas' quotation included the portion employed during the first two debates, with additional introductory wording from Lincoln's text.<sup>45</sup> Douglas constructed his case against Lincoln. He asserted that the only natural conclusion of Lincoln's House Divided speech was civil war: "I say that this is the inevitable and irresistible result of Mr. Lincoln's argument inviting a war between the North and the South."<sup>46</sup> Douglas

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Lincoln did not actually quote his House divided address, as he did 4 times in his answer to Douglas, at the Ottawa Debate. In Freeport he simply made reference to "a speech of mine, made at Springfield in June last." Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Morris, *The Long Pursuit*, 110.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Douglas quoted the section from Lincoln's House Divided speech that has already been reproduced in this section of the thesis, namely the material from the first debate. On this occasion Douglas began quotation of Lincoln with this additional Lincoln material, "We are now far into the fifth year since a policy was instituted for the avowed object, and with the confident promise of putting an end to the slavery agitation; under the operation of that policy, that agitation had only not ceased, but had constantly augmented." Douglas proceeded with the quotation as has already been discussed. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, 111.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 112.

continued to attack Lincoln's speech quoting the 'House Divided' phrase on two further occasions.

This section of Douglas' argument is of particular interest to the subject of this thesis. Douglas referred to Lincoln's use of the phrase 'house divided,' and affirmed the fact that this was not simply an attractive or convenient phrase employed by Lincoln. During the treatment of the House Divided speech in this thesis, the point was made that Lincoln's audience would have understood the profundity of this, from the perspective of Jesus' original words in the Bible. Douglas reiterated this fact, in his denunciation of Lincoln's choice of axiom, as a quotation from Douglas will serve to illustrate:

Mr. Lincoln says that a house divided against itself cannot stand, and pretends that this scriptural quotation, this language of our Lord and Master, is applicable to the American Union and American Constitution.<sup>47</sup>

Zarefsky considers that Douglas did not merely point out Lincoln's use of the Bible, but such was the possible political capital in highlighting it that Douglas 'exploited'<sup>48</sup> Lincoln's engagement with scripture. In this assertion, Douglas sought to make capital out of his anger at the fact that Lincoln had the audacity to apply the teaching of the Bible, and Jesus in particular, to the issue of contemporary political discussion.

Douglas punctuated his rebuke of Lincoln's methods with these words: "this language of our Lord and Master."<sup>49</sup> Douglas' considered that it was bad enough to associate directly the teaching of the Bible with domestic political issues, but to actually associate the words of Jesus himself with such was unacceptable. Douglas continued to pronounce anathema upon his opponent with a second use of the 'house divided' phrase:

Lincoln likens that bond of federal constitution joining free and slaves together to a house divided against itself, and says that it is contrary to the law of God and cannot stand. When did he learn, and by what authority does he proclaim, that this government is contrary to the law of God, and cannot stand.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Zarefsky, *Lincoln, Douglas and Slavery*, 145.

<sup>49</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol.3. 112.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

Douglas' assault on Lincoln began with an attack upon Lincoln's premise that the divided house cannot stand.<sup>51</sup> The Senator progressed with his case by assailing Lincoln for daring to quote the Bible. Finally, Douglas sought to assail Lincoln's House Divided Speech with a personal attack, by questioning Lincoln's presupposition that he had any right to accurately discern whether a political situation, or government itself, was in opposition to Divine edict. Lincoln was in Douglas' opinion unqualified to engage with this biblical text, and clearly from his remarks Douglas considered Lincoln's use of the Bible in this matter to be entirely inappropriate.

Douglas clearly believed that this line of discussion would gain him favour with the constituency of those present<sup>52</sup> and those reading the widely reported newspaper coverage across the country. In this thesis, the point has been made that Lincoln was a careful and skilful constructor of public utterance. Douglas was himself a nationally renowned debater.<sup>53</sup> He considered Lincoln's attempt to link the current destiny of the United States to the words of the Bible to be naïve, and he intended to use this considerable platform to exploit this. He delivered his decisive blow, namely that Lincoln used the Bible in relation to modern political events.

Douglas' belief that an attack on Lincoln's choice of the Bible was a means to enforce political opinion is surely a commanding piece of evidence, and a window into the mind of the pragmatic, professional 19<sup>th</sup> Century American politician. Douglas considered that Lincoln's use of the Bible in such an arena was wholly inappropriate. Douglas' assault was intended as an appeal to popular sentiment and judging from the recorded positive audience reaction, the tactic partially succeeded.<sup>54</sup> In the light of this it would appear that Lincoln's decision to use this biblical phrase to construct his argument, was either courageous or ill advised. Douglas' attack on Lincoln furnishes a measure of evidence that Lincoln's use of the Bible was both effective and provocative as part of his political armoury. It would not be unreasonable to submit that this discourse serves to strengthen the contention of this thesis, that aspects of Lincoln's use of the Bible were essential to the delivery of his political message.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Morris, *The Long Pursuit*, 110.

<sup>53</sup> The recollection of Lincoln's local Presbyterian Minister in Springfield, as quoted by Rev. W. Bishop in 1897, was that in 1858 Douglas was "up to that time, was regarded as a debater invincible." W.J. Johnstone, *Abraham Lincoln the Christian* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1913), 48.

<sup>54</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol.3. 112.

#### 4.2.2.2.4. The Charleston Debate

The fourth debate took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> September 1858 in Charleston, Illinois. The Charleston debate afforded Lincoln the opportunity to speak twice to Douglas' once. With just over eight minutes<sup>55</sup> of his allotment remaining, Douglas twice mentioned Lincoln's use of the 'house divided' phrase.<sup>56</sup> On this occasion he refrained from employing the fuller quotation from Lincoln's House Divided Speech, but his use of the phrase itself is interesting because it states the source of Lincoln's original inspiration, which was not lost on the Senator.

Douglas sought to remind Lincoln of what he described as "the scriptural quotation that he has applied to the federal government, that a house divided against itself cannot stand."<sup>57</sup> Douglas continued to engage his remaining minutes to build toward the following conclusion: "Mr. Lincoln tells you, in his speech at Springfield, 'that a house divided against itself cannot stand.'<sup>58</sup> Douglas continued by stressing that the divided house of the United States government, with its policy on chattel slavery, could continue perfectly well in its ideological segregation: "why cannot this government endure divided into free and slave States, as our fathers made it?"<sup>59</sup> Lincoln used his rejoinder to answer other specific attacks made by Douglas and made no obvious reference to his House Divided address.

#### 4.2.2.2.5. The Galesburg Debate

The fifth debate took place at Galesburg, Illinois, on the 7<sup>th</sup> October 1858. Douglas took to the platform twice to Lincoln's once. During the conclusion of his first address, Douglas again quoted from Lincoln's June 1858 speech; the quotation was fuller than in Charleston but not as extensive as at the beginning of the campaign.<sup>60</sup> Douglas provided a rather spurious construal of Lincoln's views, which he projected back to the formation of the Government. Douglas' conjecture was that Lincoln's doctrine of essential unity would have imposed slavery upon all the states, if imposed

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<sup>55</sup> Immediately after his first mention of the 'House Divided' phrase Douglas said, "I am told that I have but eight minutes more." Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 3*, 177.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 177-179.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the union to be dissolved --- I do not expect the house to fall, but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other." *Ibid.*, 219.

at the national formation.<sup>61</sup> Lincoln's response to his opponent was to dismiss Douglas' accusations and distortion of his position, without being drawn into further quotation of his own remarks. Lincoln rather sought to draw the audience's attention to the fact that Douglas' arguments had already been debated fully before the public.<sup>62</sup> Lincoln then attacked Douglas on a number of issues related to the debates in general without being drawn into quotation or reference to his House Divided address.

Douglas progressed toward the conclusion of his rejoinder with an attack on the apparent disunity of political philosophy within the ranks of the Illinois Republican party, with a scornful re-quotation of the House Divided Speech. He questioned Lincoln thus: "I wonder whether Mr. Lincoln and his party do not present the case which he cited from the Scriptures, of a house divided against itself cannot stand!"<sup>63</sup> Although his quotation was an attempt to establish Republican inconsistency, Douglas again identified the fact that he considered the source of Lincoln's text to be the Bible. The progression of the debates demonstrates that in the mind of Lincoln's opponent there was little doubt that Lincoln was significantly influenced by the Bible in the formation of his political doctrines.

#### **4.2.2.2.6. The Quincy Debate**

The sixth occasion for debate transpired on the 13<sup>th</sup> October 1858, in Quincy, Illinois, and provided Lincoln with his final opportunity to address the audience twice to Douglas' once. Douglas again quoted extensively from Lincoln's House divided speech. His quotation at Quincy was exactly as full as it was in the first of this series of debates in Ottawa.<sup>64</sup> In his rebuttal of Lincoln's philosophy, Douglas again demonstrated his full awareness of the influence of morals, rather than simply logic, in his adversary's thinking. Douglas made this striking comment on Lincoln's concept of preservation of the Union: "This is the humane and Christian remedy that he proposes for the great crime of slavery."<sup>65</sup> Douglas considered that Lincoln derived inspiration from the concept of right as revealed in the Bible. The reason for

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>62</sup> "My fellow citizens --- a very large portion of the speech which Judge Douglas has addressed to you has previously been delivered and put in print ... there has been an opportunity afforded to the public to see our respective views upon the topics discussed in a large portion of the speech which he just delivered." Ibid., 220-221.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 266.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 267.

continued treatment of Douglas' comments on Lincoln's speech is that, as Lincoln's most effective opponent to date, Douglas' opinion was in no way flattering or sentimental. Douglas simply recognised and even disapproved of the fact that Lincoln derived inspiration for some the presentation of his policies from the Bible.

#### **4.2.2.2.7. The Alton Debate**

The venue for the seventh and final debate was Alton, Illinois, on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 1858. The debates concluded as they had commenced, with Douglas taking the podium twice, while Lincoln was afforded a single opportunity to address the audience. Douglas wasted no time in launching his assault on Lincoln's Speech, quoting the 'House Divided' phrase, and repeating the tenor of his previously stated objection:

First, in regard to his doctrine that this government was in violation of the law of God which says, that a house divided against itself cannot stand, I repudiated it as a slander upon the immortal framers of our constitution. I then said, have often repeated, and now again assert, that in my opinion this government can endure forever, divided into free and slave states as our fathers made it.<sup>66</sup>

Douglas immediately built upon this point to repeat the argument, which he had already submitted at the Galesburg debate, eight days earlier. Douglas quoted the 'House Divided' phrase and again contended that if the founders had adopted Lincoln's assertion, then all the states of the Union would have become slave states.

You see that if this abolition doctrine of Mr. Lincoln had prevailed when the government was made, it would have established slavery as a permanent institution, in all States whether they wanted it or not.<sup>67</sup>

Morris considered that Lincoln excelled himself in his response at Alton.<sup>68</sup> In his response Lincoln now quoted his own speech. Lincoln mentioned that Douglas had quoted the Springfield speech so often, and then proceeded to make the full quotation of the House Divided section of the speech. In the quotation and introduction to the quotation, Lincoln mentions the phrase twice.<sup>69</sup> Lincoln then made the following

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 286-287.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 288.

<sup>68</sup> "Lincoln delivered one of his best performances of the campaign." Morris' comment about Abraham Lincoln's account of himself at the Alton debate with Senator Douglas. Morris, *The Long Pursuit*, 116.

<sup>69</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, 306.



remark regarding Douglas' reaction to his Speech: "the sentiments expressed in it, have been extremely offensive to Judge Douglas. He has warred upon them as Satan does upon the Bible."<sup>70</sup> Lincoln's remark prompted laughter<sup>71</sup> from the audience, which was possibly his intention; however, he makes a point that Douglas is certainly on the wrong side of the argument. Lincoln continued with a full discourse on what he originally intended the House Divided Speech to mean. Lincoln then quoted the phrase "A house divided against itself cannot stand;"<sup>72</sup> Lincoln again drew attention the fact that this quotation had been "so offensive to Judge Douglas."<sup>73</sup> Douglas' outrage coupled with the fact that Lincoln saw the need for clarification of intention, regarding the 'House Divided' remark, would further confirm the suggestion that its presence in the Speech was not a matter of indifference to the Illinois electorate.

Lincoln was on contentious ground with Douglas and his supporters for his employment of the Bible as a resource in the formation of his political argument. Lincoln continued with a gently humorous comment aimed at Douglas' assertion that his ideas were the tool of his selfish ambition. Lincoln said, "The Bible says somewhere that we are desperately selfish. I think we would have discovered that fact without the Bible."<sup>74</sup> The comment was followed up with Lincoln's claim to be nothing exceptional and certainly no more selfish than the Judge himself; the CW records the crowd's reaction to this comment as "Roars of laughter and applause."<sup>75</sup>

#### **4.2.3. Analysis of Douglas' material**

The place of the Lincoln-Douglas debates is somewhat unique in the Lincoln narrative. The debates afforded Lincoln a uniquely valuable window into the consciousness of the newspaper-reading, politically aware population of the Antebellum. The full record of Lincoln and Douglas' contributions to the 1858 debates enables conclusions to be reached regarding Lincoln's use of the Bible.

It is difficult to fully appreciate the mentality of an Antebellum politician. There are certain universal human characteristics that are timeless, but there are so many considerations that conspire to constrain the scholar's understanding. One pertinent consideration would be to understand something of the expectation of the

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 310.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

electorate regarding a politician's use of the Bible. This will shed light on the question of whether Lincoln was typical in his public use of the Bible. Douglas' debate responses have furnished a rather useful window onto this matter. Douglas submitted the following observation on Lincoln's methods: "Mr. Lincoln makes out that line of policy, and appeals to the moral sense of justice, and to the Christian feeling of the community to sustain him."<sup>76</sup>

When considering Douglas' assault on Lincoln's address, it is interesting to note that the original House Divided speech was 3,180 words in length, 2,960 of which occurred after Lincoln deployed his biblical paraphrase and related remarks.<sup>77</sup> In the words of Huston Lincoln, then he "plunged into the nuts and bolts of politics."<sup>78</sup> There was indeed ample political material for Douglas to employ to launch his offensive against Lincoln, during their seven debates. Douglas took every opportunity for robust assault on Lincoln, but especially chose to engage venomous rhetoric against Lincoln's use of the Bible's 'House Divided' text.

To further illustrate the unique treatment that the 'House Divided' discourse received from Douglas, it will be beneficial to examine Douglas' handling of another serious point raised by Lincoln's use of the biblical paraphrase. In his House Divided speech, Lincoln spoke of a possible conspiracy in which the Dred Scott decision became conveniently advantageous to both outgoing and incoming Presidents, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and Senator Douglas himself.<sup>79</sup> In the first debate at Ottawa, Douglas delivered a lengthy opening address. In a speech of 5402<sup>80</sup> words he quoted Lincoln's 'House Divided' material,<sup>81</sup> and yet failed to mention Lincoln's conspiracy theory expounded in the same address. In his reply to Douglas, Lincoln goaded his opponent by mentioning his conspiracy theory on eight occasions.<sup>82</sup> In his

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<sup>76</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3. 324-325.

<sup>77</sup> Both word count figures are achieved from a count of the text of Lincoln's House Divided speech, as recorded in *Ibid.*, Vol. 2. 462-469.

<sup>78</sup> James L. Huston, *Stephen A. Douglas and the Dilemmas of Democratic Equality* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2007), 141.

<sup>79</sup> "We can not absolutely know that all these exact adaptations are the result of preconcert. But when we see a lot of framed timbers, different portions of which we know have been gotten out at different times and places and by different workmen --- Stephen, Franklin, Roger and James, for instance --- and when we see these timbers joined together, and see they exactly make the frame of a house or a mill, all the tenons and mortises exactly fitting ... in such a case we find it impossible to not believe that Stephen and Franklin and Roger and James all understood one another from the beginning, and all worked upon a common plan or draft drawn up before the first lick was struck." Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, 466-467.

<sup>80</sup> The word count for Douglas' address is calculated from the text recorded in *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, 2-13.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-23; 27.

rejoinder Douglas only mentioned Lincoln's conspiracy theory when he was provoked to do so by a heckler.<sup>83</sup> Douglas continued by offering a rather diminutive defence of the institutions represented by those named in Lincoln's conspiracy accusation.<sup>84</sup>

Having quoted Lincoln's 'House Divided' comments so fully, and with such precision, Douglas chose not to quote Lincoln on the potentially damaging matter of the conspiracy theory. Indeed, Lincoln's parody included names of the 'workmen'<sup>85</sup> involved, namely "Stephen, Franklin, Roger and James,"<sup>86</sup> while Douglas' reference to this list was inaccurate: "his (Lincoln's) folly, and nonsense about Stephen and Franklin and Roger and Bob, and James."<sup>87</sup> Douglas inserted 'and' between each name and actually inserted an extra name, 'Bob.' He would prove his ability to accurately quote Lincoln in the debates; it is most likely that these inaccuracies were designed to ridicule Lincoln's point. When Douglas' comments were greeted by 'laughter' from the audience.<sup>88</sup> Lincoln's charge amounted to a pro-slavery conspiracy, and should have produced the most aggressive response from Douglas; after all, as Holzer states, "[all seven debates] really were about slavery."<sup>89</sup> Lincoln was surprised that in the light of all the political "nuts and bolts"<sup>90</sup> of his House Divided Speech, Douglas chose to quote and attack his use of the Bible quotation.

Douglas repeated the pattern seen in the first debate, as they progressed. In three of the remaining six debates, Douglas did not even mention Lincoln's conspiracy theory.<sup>91</sup> During the debates Douglas quoted accurately from Lincoln's 'house divided' material, and yet never made an exact quotation of any of Lincoln's text on the conspiracy theory. It is not surprising that Lincoln mused at the end of this mammoth series of debates that the issues that appeared to inspire the most passion in his opponent were not the other political issues, or even his accusation of conspiracy.

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<sup>83</sup> "A VOICE 'What about the conspiracy?' MR. DOUGLAS 'never mind, I will get to that soon enough.'" Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>85</sup> 'Stephen' referred to Senator Stephen A. Douglas. 'Franklin' referred to the 14<sup>th</sup> President, Franklin Pierce. 'Roger' referred to Chief Justice Roger Taney. 'James' was the 15<sup>th</sup> President of the USA James Buchanan.

<sup>86</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, 466.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., Vol. 3, 35-36.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>89</sup> Brian Lamb, and Susan Swain, eds. *Abraham Lincoln: Great American Historians on our Sixteenth President* (New York: Public Affairs/Perseus Books Group, 2008), 55.

<sup>90</sup> Huston, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 141.

<sup>91</sup> A reading of the Douglas debate texts in the CW revealed that in the debates at Jonesboro, Galesburg and Alton, Douglas did not directly mention Lincoln's conspiracy theory. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3.

It was Lincoln's use of the words of Christ, regarding the 'house divided,' which induced the most ardent reaction from Douglas. In fact, Senator Douglas' objection was so extreme that Lincoln was able to compare it with Satan's hatred for the Bible itself.<sup>92</sup> The value of Douglas' observation is that he appeared to recognise that in order to establish policy Lincoln appealed to the message of the Bible.

It is important to reiterate the calibre of Lincoln's opponent. Herndon considered that "Douglas is an ambitious and an unscrupulous man."<sup>93</sup> Douglas spoke not only against his Lincoln's message, but also against his methods for arriving at such. In attacking Lincoln for his use of the Bible in handling this material, Douglas considered that he was engaging in an effective tactic, which would gain favour with the audience. Lincoln depended on sound logic and adherence to the Declaration of Independence for inspiration, as well as the Bible; "He constantly appealed to the Bible – along with the Declaration – as a source of moral authority."<sup>94</sup> Douglas was a ruthless debater who not only valued winning but, according to a contemporary biographer, was intensely driven by rigid political dogma. He followed "a determined purpose to adhere to fixed political principles that has rarely had its equal."<sup>95</sup> Douglas' calculated and ruthless attacks on Lincoln's use of the Biblical text offered something of an indication that Lincoln was not typical in his reliance on the Bible in the formulation and presentation of a political message.

In his 1909 reflection on the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, Thayer described Douglas as "one of the most powerful of politicians."<sup>96</sup> He considered that Lincoln's engagement with Christ's 'House Divided' discourse was a display of "his moral courage at the outset of his public life in taking this unpopular side."<sup>97</sup> The individual examination of the seven Lincoln-Douglas Debates served to illuminate something of the reaction of the Democratic Party to Lincoln's use of the Bible in his House Divided Speech. The quotations and comments on the oratory of Douglas as the incumbent Senator served to demonstrate that Lincoln was anything but typical in his

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 306.

<sup>93</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1*. 487.

<sup>94</sup> Harry V. Jaffa, *A New Birth of Freedom: Abraham Lincoln and the Coming of the Civil War* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 155.

<sup>95</sup> James W. Sheahan, *The Life of Stephen A. Douglas* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1860), v.

<sup>96</sup> George A. Thayer, *The Religion of Abraham Lincoln* (Cincinnati: The Ebbert and Richardson Co., 1909), 13.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

methods of employing the text of Bible to clarify his political message, in order to gain election to national public office.

#### **4.2.4. Final reflection on the debates**

One of the most significant factors that made the Lincoln-Douglas Debates so important was the fact that they received national newspaper coverage. Sandburg assessed the national impact of the Lincoln/Douglas debates thus: “they also spoke to the nation. The main points of the debates reached millions of readers.”<sup>98</sup> This provided national prominence, which was a new experience for Lincoln.<sup>99</sup> Without a degree of national exposure to the wider electorate, and to the Republican Party itself, Lincoln’s election as President in 1860 would have been virtually impossible. It was not only the extent of the newspaper coverage that aroused wider interest, it was the fact that the political differences between Lincoln and Douglas represented an almost exact polarization of Northern political discussion, or, as Mitchel described, the “principle cleavage in Northern thought.”<sup>100</sup>

This research will seek to understand whether Lincoln’s political career would have been as illustrious had he not used the Bible in his political speeches. In these debates Douglas assailed his opponent by attacking the case that Lincoln made using the paraphrase from the Bible. The position has been stated that this seemed to provoke the most passionate reaction from Douglas, who appeared to consider it to be of the utmost expediency to continue in accurate, extensive, and regular quotation of Lincoln’s ‘house divided’ phrase. There can surely be little doubt that if Lincoln had not employed the words of Christ, then the Lincoln-Douglas debates would have been less than they were, and the political differences between the candidates would have been far less pronounced. It is even possible to suggest that without Lincoln’s use of the Bible, the persuasive case against the expansion of chattel slavery would have been less effectively served. Lincoln defended his House Divided Speech with considerable success. Eight years after the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, Holland reflected upon Lincoln’s performance as “a contest fought by him with wonderful power and persistence ... and with a skill rarely if ever surpassed.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln*, 140.

<sup>99</sup> Chadwick, *1858: Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson Davis*, 97.

<sup>100</sup> Thomas G. Mitchel, *Anti-Slavery Politics in Antebellum and Civil War America* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 135.

<sup>101</sup> Holland, *Abraham Lincoln*, 193-194.

It is important to absorb a reflection of the wide interest shown by scholars in these Debates. Wilson commended Holzer on his thorough research into the Lincoln-Douglas Debates. He points out that Holzer brought something genuinely new to our understanding of the original texts of the debates. For example, Holzer suggested that favourable newspaper coverage of Lincoln smoothed out Lincoln's impromptu debate remarks into "seamless cogent writing,"<sup>102</sup> while other, Douglas-supporting print media, apparently substituted the word 'nigger' with the fractionally less offensive designation 'negro.'<sup>103</sup> Wilson then sets out a competent case for challenging Holzer's theory.<sup>104</sup> No doubt a very interesting and useful exercise, and yet both authors are in the company of many of their peers who chose not to engage with the fact that a major feature of the argument rehearsed in the Lincoln-Douglas debates hinged on a Biblical quotation from a Lincoln speech.

The phrase 'House Divided' and varying amounts of the surrounding text of Lincoln's June 1859 speech are directly mentioned on 22 occasions<sup>105</sup> during the seven debates. Nicolay and Hay examined the Debates and drew a conclusion from Lincoln's performances by identifying one "dominating characteristic,"<sup>106</sup> namely Lincoln's "constant recurrence to broad and unremitting effort to lead public opinion to loftier and nobler conceptions of political duty."<sup>107</sup> Having mentioned that Lincoln sought to elevate the political debate to a lofty and noble plane, and having already referred to Lincoln's 'House Divided' Speech,<sup>108</sup> Hay and Nicolay asserted Lincoln's appeal to the Declaration of Independence without even a mention of the possibility of his inspirational debt to the Bible.

Timothy Good, in his own treatment of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, also recognised the importance of Lincoln's use of the 'house divided' phrase. He acknowledged that Douglas' quotation of the House Divided text demonstrated "the high value that he placed on Lincoln's remarks for propelling his campaign, and for

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<sup>102</sup> Wilson, *Lincoln Before Washington*, 153.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 153-154.

<sup>105</sup> The number of occasions in which the phrase 'House divided' occurs in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates was calculated from the text of both Lincoln and Douglas recorded in Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3.

<sup>106</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 2. 152.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> "Lincoln's convention speech, it will be remembered, declared that in his belief the union could not endure permanently half slave and half free, but must become all one thing or all the other." Ibid., 148.

damaging Lincoln's campaign."<sup>109</sup> Having acknowledged the significance of Lincoln's phrase to Douglas' argument, Good offers no comment or reflection on the possible implication of the Bible as an influence upon Lincoln and therefore the Debates. Indeed, all the recent major treatments of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, as cited in the bibliography of this thesis, recognise the importance of Lincoln's House Divided quotation. The recognition in the majority of cases is not followed by any treatment of Lincoln's use of the Bible. The implication or possible importance of the Bible in Lincoln and subsequently Douglas' text is not considered at all.

#### **4.2.5. Conclusion to the Senatorial campaign**

The Lincoln-Douglas Debates concluded on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1858. Whilst commenting on the *New York Times*' coverage of the Debates, Holzer offered the following observation: "It was evident that the Lincoln-Douglas Debates had become not just a local phenomenon, but a national one."<sup>110</sup> Donald reflected on the fact that although the Republican Party won the popular vote in the election for the Illinois State Legislature, on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1858, they only secured 47% of the legislature, while the Democratic Party won 53% of the legislative seats.<sup>111</sup> On the 5<sup>th</sup> January 1859 the Illinois State Legislature held the ballot for the seat in the Senate. Lincoln received 46 votes, but Douglas gained 54 and was therefore duly re-elected to serve another term in the Senate.<sup>112</sup>

Douglas won the immediate accolade, but the value of this campaign to Lincoln's future political career would prove almost inestimable. The immediate effect of his electoral defeat was that Lincoln went back to work in his law practice, with his partner William Herndon.<sup>113</sup> Lincoln reflected philosophically upon his defeat in a letter to a Springfield friend,<sup>114</sup> Dr Henry: "I am glad I made the late race. It gave me a hearing on the great and durable question of the age, which I could have in no other way."<sup>115</sup> The direct and eventual result of the Debates for Lincoln transported him from a local to a national figure. A contemporary of Lincoln's

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<sup>109</sup> Timothy S. Good, *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates and the Making of a President* (Jefferson: McFarland and Co. Inc., 2007), 43.

<sup>110</sup> David H. Donald and Harold Holzer, eds. *Lincoln in the Times: The Life of Abraham Lincoln as Originally Reported in the New York Times* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 15.

<sup>111</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 228.

<sup>112</sup> White, *Lincoln*, 287-288.

<sup>113</sup> Morris, *The Long Pursuit*, 120.

<sup>114</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 210.

<sup>115</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, 339.

commented thus: “You are like Byron, who woke up one morning and found himself famous.”<sup>116</sup>

The 2008 Sesquicentennial of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates stimulated some fresh scholarly examination of the 1858 Senatorial campaign.<sup>117</sup> These renowned historians have all acknowledged the central place of a biblical paraphrase, around which Lincoln chose to construct his political message. It is not therefore unreasonable to submit that one of the most significant political exchanges of the Antebellum was anchored to Lincoln’s employment of a single quotation from the Bible. It can be judiciously suggested that, as such, Lincoln’s use of the Bible was not only significant but in the matter of these debates it became as essential part of the interchange of ideas.

### **4.3. Lincoln during 1859-1861, until his departure for Washington**

Lincoln expanded his reputation considerably in 1859. He had spoken mainly in Illinois, but this year would also see him deliver in Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Kansas, whilst declining similar opportunities in five other States.<sup>118</sup> Lincoln travelled in excess of 4,000 miles and spoke 23 times,<sup>119</sup> and in doing so significantly advanced his political stock.

In January 1860 Lincoln was invited to attend a small gathering of Republicans, to whom he gave permission for his name to be presented as nominee for the Presidency, or at least the Vice-Presidency.<sup>120</sup> During the next two months, a newspaper campaign to secure Lincoln’s nomination gathered momentum, with the *Chicago Tribune* declaring for Lincoln on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1860.<sup>121</sup> Amid the growing speculation about his potentially illustrious future, Lincoln travelled to New York City, where he delivered his Cooper Union Speech, which would vastly increase his attractiveness as a Presidential candidate. Despite Lincoln’s growing political

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<sup>116</sup> Fehrenbacher, *Prelude to Greatness*, 98.

<sup>117</sup> Morris, *The Long Pursuit*; Chadwick, *1858: Abraham Lincoln*; Rodney O. Davis and Douglas L. Wilson, eds. *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates* (Galesburg: Knox College, 2008); Guelzo, *Lincoln and Douglas*.

<sup>118</sup> White, *Lincoln*, Location 5308.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, Location 5455.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, Location 5472.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, Location 5489.



activities, he still maintained a successful legal practice with Herndon and was in 1859 and for a considerable part of 1860 still a busy Springfield lawyer.<sup>122</sup>

The process by which Lincoln came to receive the Republican nomination for President was both complicated, and at the time a matter of considerable surprise. There were a number of strong candidates among the ranks of the Republicans, most notably Seward, Chase<sup>123</sup>, Bates, and Cameron, of whom Seward appeared the most likely to accede.<sup>124</sup> The Republican Convention met in Chicago on the Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> May, and would conclude on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> May 1860.<sup>125</sup> The genteel mores of Antebellum politics required a candidate to remain silent while his associates campaigned on his behalf.<sup>126</sup> Throughout the remainder of Lincoln's time in Springfield, Lincoln made no speeches at all. This is of course in stark contrast to the campaigning of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Presidential campaigns, which are somewhat awash with speeches from Candidates. The next speech that Lincoln would make would be at the Great Western Railroad Terminal at Springfield, as he was about to depart for Washington D.C.

Election day was Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> November 1860,<sup>127</sup> and Lincoln won the election with only 39.9% of the popular vote,<sup>128</sup> which computed to 180 out of a possible 303 Electoral College votes.<sup>129</sup> Lincoln was under no illusions regarding the awesome nature of the task before him. Donald records Lincoln's immediate thoughts regarding election: "I went home, but not to get much sleep, for I then felt as I never had before, the responsibility that was upon me."<sup>130</sup> Oates transcribes Lincoln's comments to newspaper reporters: "Well boys, your troubles are over now, mine have just begun."<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Roger Billings, and Frank J. Williams, *Abraham Lincoln Esq: The Legal Career Of America's Greatest President* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 53; 68-72; 114; 115; 121; 172-175.

<sup>123</sup> Salmon P. Chase (1808-1873) served in the US Senate and as Governor of Ohio. Chase served in President Lincoln's administration, firstly as Treasury Secretary and later Chief Justice. John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>124</sup> Good, *Lincoln for President*, 86-87.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>126</sup> Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*, 220; Harold Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect: Abraham Lincoln and the Great Secession Winter 1860-1861* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008), 14-18.

<sup>127</sup> White, *Lincoln*, Location 6103.

<sup>128</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1*, Location 19467.

<sup>129</sup> [www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/elections/election1860.html](http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/elections/election1860.html) The Library of Congress, accessed 10<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

<sup>130</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 255-256.

<sup>131</sup> Oates, *Malice Toward None*, 195.

Lincoln's tenure as President-Elect was longer than is the case in modern America, extending from 6<sup>th</sup> November 1860 to 4<sup>th</sup> March 1861,<sup>132</sup> whilst Barack Obama was elected to the Presidency on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2008, and served as President-Elect until his inauguration, on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009.<sup>133</sup> Lincoln's tenure as President-Elect receives exhaustive treatment in Holzer's work, which documents his time in the temporary office in the Illinois State House, Springfield. The President-Elect received a constant flow of people, many of whom sought political appointments, while others were simply well-wishers.<sup>134</sup> Lincoln eventually departed from Springfield on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1861.<sup>135</sup> The President-Elect undertook an extended railway tour intended to introduce him to audiences in the Northern States, with eventually delivery to Washington on 23<sup>rd</sup> February.<sup>136</sup>

#### **4.4. General use of the Bible during this period**

The fact that Lincoln was becoming more politically active meant that there are a number of speeches to consider. Lincoln's agenda was strictly political and the majority of his oratorical energies were directed against Senator Douglas' Popular Sovereignty agenda. There is not a great deal of evidence of the Bible's influence upon Lincoln in 1859, although that which exists is examined in chronological order. When Lincoln received the Republican nomination his public voice became silent, and the following chapter of this thesis will begin with the recommencement of Lincoln's public speaking.

##### **4.4.1. The speech at Lewistown, Illinois**

The CW includes a report dated 21<sup>st</sup> August 1858, from the *Chicago Press and Tribune*, in which a lengthy speech of Lincoln's is reviewed.<sup>137</sup> The address was delivered at Lewistown on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1858. The full text has not survived, but the report conveyed Lincoln's criticism of Douglas who had made pretension to the

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<sup>132</sup> White, *Lincoln*, Locations 6103 and 6688.

<sup>133</sup> [www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/barackobama](http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/barackobama), accessed 19<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

<sup>134</sup> Lincoln's tenure as President-Elect is covered in detail by the following recent publication; Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*; William E. Baringer, *A House Dividing: Lincoln as President Elect* (Springfield: Abraham Lincoln association, 1945); W.T. Goggeshall, "The Journeys of Abraham Lincoln: As President Elect and as President Martyred," *The Ohio State Journal*, November 1865.

<sup>135</sup> Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, 203.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>137</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, 547, Annotation 1.

mantle of Henry Clay, whom Lincoln admired.<sup>138</sup> In his attempt to discredit said comparison, Lincoln sought the strongest comparison available, which appeared to be from the Bible. He proceeded to compare Clay's political position with Douglas' and declared them to be as diverse as "Beelzebub to an Angel of Light."<sup>139</sup> This is a most interesting choice of phrase. It has been established that Lincoln knew the Bible extraordinarily well, and in his preparation he was always fastidious. The fact is the Bible only mentions the phrase 'Angel of Light' once, and that is in a comparison with evil. 2 Corinthians 11:14 says, "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light". Lincoln did not use the term 'Satan'; he preferred 'Beelzebub'. The term 'Beelzebub' occurs seven times, all of which occur in the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>140</sup> It is therefore not a Pauline term, and yet Lincoln employs this designation in his reference.

This is the only occasion in which Lincoln referred to Beelzebub. He spoke of Satan three times,<sup>141</sup> and used the 'Devil' in ten instances.<sup>142</sup> Of these thirteen occurrences, Lincoln applied the term 'Satan' only once to an aspect of Senator Douglas' message. In his final Debate, Lincoln referred to Douglas' quotation of, and objection to, his use of the term 'House Divided.'<sup>143</sup> Lincoln, however, chose this occasion to use a term he had never, or indeed would never, use again. Lincoln's thorough Bible knowledge would suggest that he would be aware that the correct Pauline designation was actually 'Satan', and yet he substituted 'Beelzebub.' This is conceivably nothing more than coincidence, however an alternative explanation can be located in the meaning of the term. Satan simply means 'The Adversary,'<sup>144</sup> while Beelzebub has a rather more redolent meaning. Three of the seven occurrences of

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 545.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> The term Beelzebub occurs in the following text; Matthew 10:25; 12:24; 12:27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15; 11:18; 11:19.

<sup>141</sup> Lincoln employed the term Satan on these three occasions. To Mary S. Owens, 13<sup>th</sup> December 1836. The Seventh Debate with Senator Stephen A. Douglas, at Alton, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1858. To G.B. Idle, J.R. Doolittle and A. Hubbell, 30<sup>th</sup> May 1864. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, 54; Vol.3, 305; Vol.7, 368.

<sup>142</sup> Lincoln employed the term Devil on the following ten occasions: Second Reply to James Adams, 18<sup>th</sup> October 1837; Speech on the Sub-Treasury 26<sup>th</sup> December 1839; To Joshua F. Speed, 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1832; Temperance Address, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1842; The Rebecca Letter, 27<sup>th</sup> August 1842; Speech in the US House of Representatives on the Presidential Question, 27<sup>th</sup> July 1848; 508; Opinion of the Admission of West Virginia into the Union, 31<sup>st</sup> December 1862; Remarks to 'The One-Legged Brigade,' 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1863; There are two of the ten Lincoln usages in which the term Devil is not used as a proper noun; Speech at Cincinnati, Ohio, 17<sup>th</sup> September 1859; To George Robertson, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1862; Ibid., Vol. 1, 106; Vol.1, 167; Vol.1, 265; Vol.1, 273; Vol.1, 292; Vol.1, Vol.6, 27; Vol.6, 226; Vol.3, 443; Vol.5, 513.

<sup>143</sup> The Seventh Debate at Alton, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1858. Ibid., Vol. 3, 305.

<sup>144</sup> Strong, *The New Strong's*, Lexicon entry for Satan.

‘Beelzebub’ offer a meaning: Matthew and Mark suggest “the prince of the devils,”<sup>145</sup> while Luke renders it “the chief of the devils.”<sup>146</sup> Lincoln’s humour has already been observed in his commentary on Douglas. It is possible that for Lincoln, the comparison between Douglas and ‘The Adversary’ was not as entertaining or potent as with ‘The Prince of the Devils.’

Although this is only a small contribution to the speech, it is nonetheless an example of the way in which Lincoln employed the Bible to reinforce his point. For Lincoln, the Bible contained the starkest of comparisons, namely ‘An Angel of Light’ with ‘The Prince of the Devils.’ When Lincoln needed an ultimate, in terms of moral or logical argument, or as in this case, of comparison, he often turned to the influence of the text and message of the Bible.

#### **4.4.2. The speech at Columbus, Ohio**

The beginning of September 1859 brought the news that Senator Douglas would be campaigning in Ohio, to enhance the prospects for the Democratic candidates in the State elections.<sup>147</sup> The Ohio Republican State Central Committee immediately invited Lincoln to address audiences in their districts.<sup>148</sup> Lincoln delivered an address of 11,849 words<sup>149</sup> at Columbus, Ohio on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1859.<sup>150</sup>

The speech was a substantial and in-depth political denunciation of Douglas’ policy of Popular Sovereignty. Lincoln sought to discredit Popular Sovereignty by isolating Douglas’ apparent moral indifference to the issue of slavery. Lincoln quoted Thomas Jefferson, who was also a Democrat, and spoke of the moral wrong of slavery: “I tremble for my country when I remember that God is just.”<sup>151</sup> This was a slight misquotation; Jefferson actually used the word ‘reflect’<sup>152</sup> instead of ‘remember.’<sup>153</sup> Lincoln delivered his point that Douglas’ philosophy was actually inconsistent with the thinking of his own political heritage. He then punctuated his

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<sup>145</sup> Matthew 12:24 and Mark 3:22 render Beelzebub thus.

<sup>146</sup> Luke 11:15.

<sup>147</sup> White, *Lincoln*, Location 5314.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Word count for this Address is calculated from the text of Lincoln’s speech. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, 400-425.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 400.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 410.

<sup>152</sup> The exact quotation to which Lincoln referred was rendered thus, “Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep forever.” Jerry Holmes, *Thomas Jefferson: A Chronology of his Thoughts* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2002), 43.

<sup>153</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, 410.

argument with a short discourse in which he appeared to employ language from the Bible. Lincoln spoke of slavery as an affront to Divine justice, and spoke of “those who ... braved the arm of Jehovah.”<sup>154</sup> The phrase ‘Arm of Jehovah’ does not appear in the Bible; rather the rendering is “arm of the Lord,” which appears in Isaiah 51:9 and 53:1, while John 12:38 offers the quotation from Isaiah 53:1. This is the only occasion in which Lincoln employed the term, and Ostergard considers that he used ‘Jehovah’ rather than ‘The Lord,’ “to match the literary tone of the Old Testament.”<sup>155</sup>

This instance cannot be regarded as important evidence for Lincoln’s use of the Bible. It is considered in the interest of the wider objective to offer a comprehensive investigation of Lincoln’s possible engagement with the Bible. It has been stated that Lincoln does not present an exact quotation from the Bible. It could be argued that the elements of a paraphrase are in evidence, however the fact that the phrase is only four words in length would make identification point more closely to an allusion. Beale’s recommendation that a reproduction of a unique combination of at least three words,<sup>156</sup> is in evidence in Lincoln’s text. His ‘arm of Jehovah’ could feasibly be considered an allusion to ‘arm of the Lord’ from Isaiah. It is also important to concede that this phrase would have formed part of the revival preaching of the Second Great Awakening, which Lincoln was exposed to during his youth. It is inconceivable that the concept of the ‘arm of the Lord’ would not have been mentioned in the sermons Lincoln heard, in both the Little Pigeon community and Springfield. It is equally possible that Lincoln selected the allusion from his reading of the Bible or from his Church experience. It is of course judicious to propose that Lincoln’s language may be the product of a fusion of both his Bible reading and wider Christian experience. What is clear is that whether directly or indirectly Lincoln drew inspiration from the words of Isaiah mirrored by John.

#### **4.4.3. The speech at the Cooper Institute, New York**

The evidence presented thus far in this research has begun to demonstrate the important place and influence of the Bible in the political writings and speeches of Lincoln. There are, however, a number of important occasions in which Lincoln did not engage his expansive knowledge of the Bible. Lincoln’s speech at The Cooper

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ostergard, *Inspired Wisdom*, 99.

<sup>156</sup> Beale, *Handbook*, Location 775.

Institute, New York City, was one such occasion.<sup>157</sup> Such was the importance of this opportunity for Lincoln to impose himself on the minds of the powerful Eastern electorate that Holzer considered this would become *The Speech that made Abraham Lincoln President*.<sup>158</sup>

On 27<sup>th</sup> February 1860<sup>159</sup> Lincoln gave the Speech that extended for 7,691 words<sup>160</sup> and took one and a half hours to deliver.<sup>161</sup> This was an entirely political and rather technical speech,<sup>162</sup> which was designed to impress a much more sophisticated audience than Lincoln had been accustomed to. The Speech in many ways restated the Republican positions that Lincoln had championed during his debates with Senator Douglas. The conclusion contained Lincoln's only possible reference to the Bible. Lincoln considered that Republicans were being expected to adopt an indifferent attitude to slavery, about which he contended there should be no such apathy.<sup>163</sup> He concluded with his assessment that "Union appeals beseeching true Union men to yield to Disunionists."<sup>164</sup> Lincoln described this scenario as "reversing the Divine rule, and calling, not the sinners, but the righteous to repentance."<sup>165</sup>

Lincoln's choice of language is evocative of the language of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. Matthew 9:13 states "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance," while Mark 2:17 and Luke 5:32 offer "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Section 1.6 of this thesis has sought to suggest principles for establishing the type of biblical reception at play, in Lincoln's engagement with the Bible. The point was made that this is not an exact science and certain cases can prove inconclusive. In this instance Lincoln's language is almost identical to that of Mark and Luke, however he reversed the identity of those who should repent. Although the similarity of language could suggest a paraphrase, the

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<sup>157</sup> The venue for the Address given by Lincoln was The Cooper Institute, but the venue was only rented for the evening, and the speech has been therefore remembered as the Cooper Union Speech. Holzer, *Lincoln at Cooper Union*, 6.

<sup>158</sup> Holzer presents the case for the importance of Lincoln's speech in the eventually Presidential election of 1860. *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>159</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3. 522.

<sup>160</sup> Word count for this Speech is calculated from, *Ibid.*, 522-550.

<sup>161</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol.1. Location 16769.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, Locations 16769-16795.

<sup>163</sup> "Let us be diverted by none of those sophistical contrivances wherewith we are so industriously plied and belabored --- contrivances such as groping for some middle ground between the right and the wrong, vain as the search for a man who should be neither a living man nor a dead man---such as a policy of "don't care" on a question about which all true men do care." Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3. 550.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

nature of Lincoln's wider discussion leads to this submission this he is employing an allusion. One of the defining characteristics of an allusion is that in many case it requires the audience to recognise its source.<sup>166</sup> The submission of the scholars referred to in this thesis, is that an allusion can be closely associated with a source when there is similarity of language and terms. Lincoln would undoubtedly have heard these words in sermons and conversations about faith, over many years. It is possible that the inspiration for his employment thereof was due to his wider ecclesiastical experience. However the similarity of language from a well-known verse from the Bible, when coupled with the testimony regarding Lincoln's thorough preparation for the Speech,<sup>167</sup> would suggest the Bible itself to be the primary source for this remark.

It is reasonable to submit that the majority of Lincoln's audience would have recognised the phrase as an adaptation from the Bible. This understanding would be necessary to comprehend the sense of irony that Lincoln was trying to project. This is interesting in the light of Tate's explanation of a biblical allusion. He states that an allusion is a useful literary devise with which the author can "ask the reader to place prior information into a new context and think about the significance."<sup>168</sup> Lincoln's point would be lost on an audience who did not realise that originally Jesus called sinners to repent. Lincoln reflects upon what he considered the ridiculous notion that the Republicans should be called to repentance. Lincoln was in a sense asking his audience to place prior information in this modern political context to understand his point. If it can be suggested this his use of this language was intended to evoke the words of Jesus, then once again Lincoln was seeking to furnish pointed comparison. The two components of Jesus and Lincoln's remarks were sinners and the righteous, by implication Lincoln assigns righteousness to his cause and condemns Douglas' position.

This instance of Lincoln's use of the Bible is by no means a major part of this important speech, although it does illustrate once again that when he wanted to employ comparisons and absolutes, it was the Bible that he considered to be source of effective material.

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<sup>166</sup> Beale, *Handbook*, Location 770; Tate, *Handbook for Biblical*, Location 1732.

<sup>167</sup> Holzer, *Lincoln at Cooper Union*, 75-83.

<sup>168</sup> Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, 173.

In conclusion to this brief examination of Lincoln's speech it is interesting to reflect on a particular point. One of the accusations that Herndon and a number of other scholars levelled against Lincoln was that he used the Bible in such proliferation to gain favour with the largely religious electorate.<sup>169</sup> It is well documented and generally accepted that Lincoln took this opportunity to speak at the Cooper Institute extremely seriously, and was more than aware of the comprehensive implications of either success or failure. Nott was partly responsible for Lincoln's original invitation to speak in New York, and reflected upon the speech as "...the most carefully prepared, the most elaborately investigated and demonstrated and verified of all the work of his life."<sup>170</sup> Holzer recorded a conversation that occurred in New York City between Lincoln and his host, in which he firmly declined a dinner invitation in order to continue to work on the preparation of his delivery.<sup>171</sup> If the suggestion that Lincoln employed the Bible to placate his audience is correct, then it should be acknowledged that in this most important of speeches his use of the Bible was minimal. If the inclusion of the Bible were so important for Lincoln's political acceptance and advancement, then he would have been expected to include considerable citation at Cooper Union.

#### **4.5. The President-Elect departs for Washington**

The journey from Springfield to Washington occupied several days of rail travel. This afforded Lincoln the opportunity to introduce himself to the people of the cities, along his route to the nation's capital.

##### **4.5.1. Lincoln's Farewell Address at Springfield**

On the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1861,<sup>172</sup> Lincoln left Springfield for what would prove to be the final time. A crowd of approximately 1,000 people<sup>173</sup> gathered to bid him farewell. A specially chartered train would convey the President-Elect and his entourage to Washington. The scene of Lincoln's departure was the Springfield Great Western

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<sup>169</sup> This argument will be revisited, and the scholars listed and more thoroughly challenged in Section 7.8 of this thesis.

<sup>170</sup> George H. Putnam, *Abraham Lincoln: The People's Leader in the Struggle for National Existence* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1909), 219.

<sup>171</sup> Holzer, *Lincoln at Cooper Union*, 80.

<sup>172</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 273.

<sup>173</sup> Epstein, *The Lincolns*, 279.



Railroad Depot.<sup>174</sup> At 7.55am,<sup>175</sup> Lincoln stood at the rear of his train and addressed the crowd with “one of the most affecting of his prose masterpieces.”<sup>176</sup>

Lincoln’s Farewell Address has passed into historical memory as a vital contribution to the Lincoln canon. Shaw spoke of the power of the Address, that “has often and justly been quoted as one of the best examples of his power to express thought and feeling in English sentences of rare and haunting quality.”<sup>177</sup> Withers states that it has “a pathos which we can feel even after all these years.”<sup>178</sup> A further illustration of the place of the Address in historical memory is demonstrated by the fact that the Chicago Century of Progress Exhibition of 1933 set aside a room in which a statue of Lincoln was placed.<sup>179</sup> The walls were inscribed with two of what were clearly considered to be Lincoln’s seminal speeches. The texts selected were the Gettysburg Address and the Farewell Address at Springfield.<sup>180</sup>

Lincoln’s Farewell Address is unique, due to the fact that its delivery was impromptu, with uncharacteristic emotion. The Address provides something of an uncommon window into the thoughts that moved and influenced the President-Elect. It is not the practice of this thesis to furnish complete quotations of Lincoln’s speeches. However, this Address is extremely brief and such a large percentage is relevant to the topic at hand that an exception will be made.

My Friends – No one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feelings 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 everywhere for good, let us

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<sup>174</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 273.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 2*. 758-759.

<sup>177</sup> Albert Shaw, *Abraham Lincoln: The Year of his Election* (New York: The Review of Reviews Corporation, 1929), 239.

<sup>178</sup> Henry Withers, *Abraham Lincoln: A Champion of Freedom* (Kessinger Publishing 2003), 145.

<sup>179</sup> The statue was a replica of the Lorado Taft statue of Lincoln that stood at Urbana, Illinois. Paul M. Angle, George W. Bunn and Benjamin P. Thomas, eds. “Lincoln’s Holdings and Investments,” *Bulletin of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, no. 31, (1933): 10.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

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.<sup>181</sup>

#### 4.5.1.1. A uniquely emotional and impromptu address

Lincoln found his parting to be an emotional experience.<sup>182</sup> Burlingame quotes Conkling,<sup>183</sup> an eyewitness, who recounted the fact that Lincoln was so moved with emotion that he found it difficult to deliver his remarks.<sup>184</sup> Holzer records Judd's<sup>185</sup> remark to Pinkerton<sup>186</sup> that Lincoln's "face was pale, and quivered with emotion."<sup>187</sup> The *Illinois State Journal* submitted the following report on the Address: "We have known Mr. Lincoln for many years; we have heard him speak upon a hundred different occasions; but we never saw him so profoundly affected."<sup>188</sup> Indeed Butler submits that despite the triumphal aspect of leaving to assume the Presidency, his departure was also "One of the sad occasions of Abraham Lincoln's life,"<sup>189</sup> as he bade farewell to such an important chapter in his life. Morgan painted a moving picture of an emotional Lincoln exerting a powerful influence upon the crowd: "He stood there, a solemn figure, and a spell fell upon the neighbours who had gathered at the Springfield Station."<sup>190</sup> Herndon was not present at Lincoln's departure,<sup>191</sup> but he was evidently made aware of Lincoln's demeanour: "He stood for a moment, as if to suppress evidences of emotion."<sup>192</sup> Herndon's assessment was that Lincoln delivered a "brief but dignified and touching address."<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 190.

<sup>182</sup> Epstein, *The Lincolns*, 278.

<sup>183</sup> James Cook Conkling (1816-1899) served as Mayor of Springfield. He was a lifelong friend and supporter of Lincoln. Neely, *Lincoln Encyclopedia*, 68; Larry D. Mansch, *Abraham Lincoln, President-Elect: The Four Critical Months From Election to Inauguration* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2005).

<sup>184</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 2. 759.

<sup>185</sup> Norman Buell Judd (1815-1878) was an Illinois politician who eventually became a supporter of Lincoln. President Lincoln appointed him as Minister to Berlin and minister to Prussia. Neely, *Lincoln Encyclopedia*, 168-169.

<sup>186</sup> Allan Pinkerton (1819-1884) ran a Chicago based detective agency. He became a close associate of Lincoln for the entirety of the Presidency. Richard Wormser, *Pinkerton: America's First Private Eye* (New York: Walker, 1990).

<sup>187</sup> Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 296.

<sup>188</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 2. 759.

<sup>189</sup> W.F. Butler, "Lincoln's Religion Still a Mystery?" *Illinois Magazine*, May/June 1986, 24.

<sup>190</sup> James Morgan, *Abraham Lincoln: The Boy and the Man* (Norwood: The MacMillan Company, 1908), 170.

<sup>191</sup> The day before the President-Elect's departure for Washington, Herndon had said a private goodbye to Lincoln at their Law office. Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 2. 195-196.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

In addition to the emotional nature of both the content and delivery of the Address, there was another unusual aspect to Lincoln's words. The case has been made on several occasions during this thesis that Lincoln was nothing if not meticulous in his written preparation. However, this address was without script and probably without preparation.<sup>194</sup> The Address was also entirely unannounced; in fact, Lincoln had already stated that there would actually be no farewell address.<sup>195</sup> The tone of Nicolay and Hay's language suggests that Lincoln's speech took them by surprise.<sup>196</sup> The man known for his deliberate and careful preparation stood, and in front of a 1,000 people, including some newspaper reporters, delivered an unplanned address.

The Address is of interest because it marked a significant moment in Lincoln's life and political career, and yet is uncharacteristic of other famous Lincoln speeches, in that it is both emotional and unplanned.<sup>197</sup> It is not unreasonable to assume that Lincoln's emotion, as well as the sentiment he expressed, were genuine. Indeed, Lincoln's diminutive discourse is something of a window into his true nature, and an indication of his attitude to the impending responsibilities of the Presidency. Lincoln allowed the audience at Springfield to see and hear him at a moment of vulnerability. It is therefore plausible to submit that Lincoln's short Address provides history with a rare glimpse into some of his innermost thoughts and feelings. This research is concerned with the place of the Bible in Lincoln's political compositions; this section will examine the contention that the Address' contained evidence of Lincoln's reliance upon the Bible.

#### **4.5.1.2. Lincoln's use of the Bible in the Address**

Lincoln did not employ any direct quotations from the Bible in the Address. However Lincoln's spontaneous language does offer some indication of reliance upon the Bible.

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<sup>194</sup> Ron L. Andersen, *Abraham Lincoln: God's Humble Instrument* (Salt Lake City: Millennial Mind Publishing, 2009) Kindle edition, Locations 2079-88.

<sup>195</sup> "The night before, he had told the reporters travelling with him that he would make no remarks at the station, but once inside the car, he changed his mind." Wilson, *Lincoln's Sword*, 10-11.

<sup>196</sup> "Then came the central incident of the morning. The bell gave notice of starting; but as the conductor paused with his hand lifted to the bell-rope, Mr Lincoln appeared on the platform of the car, and raised his hand to command attention." *Ibid.*, 290-291.

<sup>197</sup> It is noteworthy that the text recorded in the CW as the authoritative version of Lincoln's Farewell Address, was both written and dictated by Lincoln. He transcribed some of the speech and then allowed Nicolay to complete the transcript. The recording of the speech took place immediately after its delivery, during the first section of the train journey. Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 4*. 190-191, Footnote 1.

It is possible that at this emotive juncture Lincoln leant upon that which had been a formative part of his reading; as Butler observed, “Throughout Lincoln’s life, he held a deep reverence for the Bible.”<sup>198</sup> The contention that the Bible was a source for Lincoln’s delivery will be examined.

#### **4.5.1.2.1. Jesus, Paul, and Joshua**

Lincoln began by revealing his own understanding of his situation, a perspective that he considered unique.<sup>199</sup> He then offered a comparison between his assignment and that of George Washington. His assessment was that his task as President was even “greater than that which rested upon Washington.”<sup>200</sup> Lincoln had already made reference to his great admiration for Washington in previous well-reported addresses,<sup>201</sup> and now, without comparing himself personally to Washington, he assessed his task as potentially more exacting.

Lincoln then revealed his belief that part of the secret of the greatness of Washington was the fact that God was with him in his endeavours, “that Divine Being, who ever attended him.”<sup>202</sup> Lincoln continued in his comparison with Washington, asserting that he could expect similar success only if he received the same divine help that was bestowed upon the first President. A full quotation of Lincoln’s remarks will be helpful at this juncture:

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. Without that assistance I cannot fail.<sup>203</sup>

Charnwood offered this assessment: “He was, indeed, going to a task not less great than Washington’s, but he was going to it with a preparation in many respects far inferior to his.”<sup>204</sup> Lincoln was well aware of the difference, in preparedness for executive office, between himself and George Washington. It is possible that this added to his sense of utter dependence on God’s assistance. Lincoln’s remark on divine assistance becomes an insightful window into the usually carefully guarded

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<sup>198</sup> Butler, *Lincoln’s Religion*, 23.

<sup>199</sup> “My friends – no one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting.” Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 190.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> An example is the Ottawa Debate with Douglas. Ibid., Vol. 3. 2-38.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., Vol. 4. 190.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, 150.

world of Lincoln's thinking. Lincoln's language is possible an allusion to the words of Jesus and Paul. The criteria set out for the identification of biblical echoes can be comfortably applied in this instance. It has already been explained that an echo is an ultimately inconclusive allusion,<sup>205</sup> the nature is that it is probably rather than certainly dependent upon a text.<sup>206</sup> There are two of Hayes factors of recognition that are helpful in establishing that Lincoln is employing biblical echo. Hayes contests that 'thematic coherence' is important;<sup>207</sup> Lincoln's use of the language is certainly consistent with the intentions of Jesus and Paul's original context. Hayes also suggests that an echo can be more easily appreciated when the thought is recurrent in the author's wider body of work.<sup>208</sup> It will be demonstrated Lincoln returned to the issue of the essentiality of divine assistance, during the presidency. This treatment of Lincoln's possible use of the Bible in the Address contends that there was influence from both external factors and Lincoln's personal reading and knowledge of the Bible. It is possible that Lincoln's thinking was informed by his Bible reading, and that influence can be traced to words associated with Jesus, Paul, and Joshua.

#### **4.5.1.2.1.1. Possible influence of Jesus**

These previous sentences on divine assistance are Lincoln's own construction, but they are possibly not of his own invention. Ostergard suggests the strong possibility that the inspiration for Lincoln's words came from the words of Jesus, recorded in John 15:5: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."<sup>209</sup> There is certainly a thematic similarity between this passage from the Gospels and Lincoln's thought process. With divine assistance there would be success, without it there is the certainty of abject failure. This interpretation is stated in rather strong terms by the commentary notes of *The Ostervald Bible*; "The similitude of the vine and the branches, denotes the strictness of the union between Christ and the faithful, that all our happiness depends upon this union."<sup>210</sup> The point has been established that Lincoln read the *Ostervald Bible* expansively and this reflection is therefore most likely the first explanation Lincoln ever received, regarding this passage. It is

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<sup>205</sup> Corley, Lemke and Lovejoy, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 435.

<sup>206</sup> Beale, *Handbook*, Location 769.

<sup>207</sup> Hayes, *Echoes of Scripture*, 30.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>209</sup> Ostergard, *Inspired Wisdom*,

<sup>210</sup> Commentary notes relating to the text of John 15:5.

submitted that this was the interpretation with which Lincoln was familiar; as the Address states, without the vine the branches can do nothing. It is interesting to note that nearly two years into the Presidency, Lincoln still pondered the essential nature of divine assistance.

No one is more deeply than myself aware that without His favour our highest wisdom is but as foolishness and that our most strenuous efforts would avail nothing in the shadow of his displeasure.<sup>211</sup>

He also reflected: “Without the direct assistance of the Almighty I was certain of failing.”<sup>212</sup> The language that flowed from the uncharacteristically emotional President-Elect suggested his feeling of powerlessness without God’s help with his administration.

#### **4.5.1.2.1.2. Possible influence of Paul**

Paul composed a similar thought in Romans 8:31: “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” Lincoln would have been well aware of this as one of the Apostle Paul’s most eminent phrases, and thus “If God be for us, who can be against us” is a credible suggestion as to the inspiration for Lincoln’s “With that assistance I cannot fail.”<sup>213</sup> It is noteworthy that Lincoln would return to this thought in 1863: “If God be with us, we will succeed; if not we will fail.”<sup>214</sup> When pressed by the brevity of the moment and moved by the emotion of the occasion, it is feasible to submit that Lincoln’s thoughts led him to the Bible for inspiration. The similarity of thought in Lincoln’s “with that assistance I cannot fail”<sup>215</sup> and the Pauline “If God be for us, who can be against us” is surely too profound to be dismissed as coincidence.

The tone of the Address is solemn because of the emotion of the departure, but also because of Lincoln’s understandable sense of foreboding at the enormity of the task ahead of him. It is worth noting that Lincoln’s ominous anticipation of his task was not simply prophetic speculation. By the time he departed for Washington, the national condition was already somewhat grave. In November 1860, a quotation from

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<sup>211</sup> Letter to Russell and Fenton, 5<sup>th</sup> January 1863. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6. 39.

<sup>212</sup> Remarks to Baltimore Presbyterian Synod, 24<sup>th</sup> October 1863 (Version 2). *Ibid.*, 332.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 4. 190.

<sup>214</sup> Remarks to New School Presbyterians, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1863. *Ibid.*, Vol. 6. 531.

<sup>215</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 190.

Alexander Stephens<sup>216</sup> offered the following illustrative summation: “We are going to destruction as fast as we can.”<sup>217</sup> By the time Lincoln bade farewell to the residents of Springfield, seven States had already seceded from the Union.<sup>218</sup> Lincoln’s task as President was to preserve the Union. Presented with such a task, it appears that he had taken comfort and drawn strength from the belief that divine assistance would neutralise even the most acute opposition.

#### 4.5.1.2.1.3. Possible influence of Joshua

Lincoln’s stated awareness of the essentiality of God’s enabling presence could have its roots in the message of the Old Testament. The context of Lincoln’s remarks was the comparison of his task with that of George Washington. Washington had attained a unique place in the thoughts and affections of the American people within his own lifetime. Henry Lee delivered one of the most famous eulogies dedicated to Washington, in Congress.<sup>219</sup> It serves to display something of Washington’s place in the American consciousness. Lee described Washington as being “first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.”<sup>220</sup> Lincoln rather accurately predicted that his task as President would be an even greater challenge than that which faced the father of the Republic.<sup>221</sup> Holzer considers this to be a stroke of genius on Lincoln’s part: “he manoeuvred God the Father together with the father of his country onto the side of the union – with himself as the beneficiary of their blessings.”<sup>222</sup> Lincoln’s assertion that he would fail without God’s help can be regarded as a statement of characteristic humility, reflecting his awareness that the task was greater than his abilities.

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<sup>216</sup> Alexander H. Stephens (1812-1883) served in Congress from 1843 to 1859, and was a colleague of Lincoln’s during his single term of office. He served as the Vice President of the Confederate States of America. Richard M. Johnston, *The Life of Alexander H. Stephens* (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2006); Thomas E. Schott, *Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia: A Biography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

<sup>217</sup> Schott, *Alexander H. Stephens*, 312.

<sup>218</sup> James L. Abrahamson, *The Men of Secession and Civil War, 1859-1861* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2000), xix.

<sup>219</sup> William M.S. Rasmussen and Robert S. Tilton, *George Washington: The Man Behind the Myths* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), 262.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 190.

<sup>222</sup> Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 304.

A particularly interesting account from Orrin Pennell has been overlooked by Lincoln scholars of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Pennell recorded President McKinley's<sup>223</sup> assertion that the night before Lincoln's departure from Springfield, he was presented with a Union Flag by a Chicago friend. The flag bore words from the book of Joshua, a paraphrase of Joshua 1:9 and 1:5. The inscription of the flag read thus:

Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life. As I was with Moses, so shalt I be with thee.<sup>224</sup>

Pennell's reporting of McKinley's recollection commands respect when considering the fact that Pennell's book was published and in circulation while McKinley was actually serving as President. McKinley's claim that Lincoln was given this flag with part of a biblical quotation promising divine presence and assistance, affords the possibility that these thoughts were prominent as he spoke extemporaneously. Indeed the *Ostervald Bible* provided commentary on Joshua 1:5 and 9: "The promise that God made to Joshua not to forsake him may be applied to all true Christians."<sup>225</sup>

In his seminal work, Sandburg suggested that Lincoln's delivery in this Address was slow and deliberate.<sup>226</sup> The emotion of the moment and this suggestion of slow delivery strongly indicate that these were heartfelt sentiments from the President-Elect. The fact appears that not only did he hope God's help; in Lincoln's thinking it appeared to be nothing less than essential.

#### **4.5.1.2.2. Omnipresence**

Having made the statement that without God's help he was doomed, yet so equipped he would be guaranteed success,<sup>227</sup> Lincoln proceeded to convey his trust in God's omnipresence. His next sentence is worthy of full quotation: "Trusting in Him, who can go with me, and remain with you and be everywhere for good, let us confidently

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<sup>223</sup> William McKinley (1843-1901) was the twenty-fifth US President of the serving from 1897 till his assassination in 1901. Howard W. Morgan, *William McKinley and his America* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2003).

<sup>224</sup> Orrin H. Pennell, *Religious Views of Abraham Lincoln* (Alliance: R.M. Scranton Printing Co, 1899), 17; Frederick G. Owen, *A Heart that Yearned for God* (Washington DC: Third Century Publishers, 1976), 118.

<sup>225</sup> Commentary notes, which accompany Joshua 1:5 and 9.

<sup>226</sup> Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln*, 195.

<sup>227</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 190.



hope that all will be well.”<sup>228</sup> Holzer considers Lincoln’s words to reflect that fact that “His destiny, he declared was now in God’s hands – a powerful, omnipresent divinity capable of safeguarding his neighbours in Springfield even as He blessed his work in Washington.”<sup>229</sup> Lincoln’s knowledge of the Bible was not a bland ability to simply quote from the text. There are moments that demonstrate that Lincoln possessed an effective knowledge of the Bible and was adept in applying such to his political context. In this Address, Lincoln tackled the complicated issue of describing omnipresence, and with one short sentence applied the doctrine to the situation of the moment. It is interesting to note the assessment of Hirsch and Van Haften in considering Lincoln’s parting words. They concluded that he is able to “explain technical matters with such a simple ease that they cease to be technical.”<sup>230</sup>

#### **4.5.1.2.2.1. Reverend Smith’s treatment of omnipresence**

In his Farewell Address, Lincoln mentioned the loss of his beloved son Eddie.<sup>231</sup> The Reverend James Smith was the Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Springfield, and conducted Eddie’s funeral service. It was after Eddie’s death that Lincoln secured a copy of Reverend Smith’s book,<sup>232</sup> *The Christians’ Defence*.<sup>233</sup> Smith’s book was the result of a debate that he engaged in with Olmstead, in Mississippi.<sup>234</sup> Lincoln was initially impressed with Smith’s refutation of Volney and Paine.<sup>235</sup> Thomas Lewis, an elder of the church, had the distinction of organising the rental of a pew to the Lincoln family.<sup>236</sup> Lewis recalled a conversation in which Lincoln spoke of reading about half of Smith’s book, and of wanting to secure a copy in order to complete it.<sup>237</sup> Barton believed that the book interested Lincoln because Smith had also passed through a period of youthful scepticism and become a strong advocate for the truths of

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 303.

<sup>230</sup> Hirsch and Van Haften, *Structure of Reason*, Locations 203-9.

<sup>231</sup> “Here my children have been born, and one is buried.” Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 190.

<sup>232</sup> Barton, *Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, 156; Temple, *From Septic*, 60.

<sup>233</sup> James Smith, *The Christian’s Defence, 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* (Cincinnati: J.A. James, 1843).

<sup>234</sup> William E. Barton, “The Book that Converted Lincoln.” *The Rockford Star*, 21<sup>st</sup> December, 1921.

<sup>235</sup> Barton, “Book that Converted Lincoln.”

<sup>236</sup> T. Lewis, “The Religion of Lincoln.” *Illinois State Register*, 16<sup>th</sup> December, 1898.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

Christianity.<sup>238</sup> This theory is confirmed by the personal testimony of Lewis, who commented that Lincoln claimed that Smith's book "changed my belief in the Bible."<sup>239</sup> The omnipresence of God is seen by the Pastor of Lincoln's church as an elevated understanding of the nature of God. Smith discussed the development of revelation, and considered that the early understanding of God was as "a powerful though limited being, with human passions and appetites, limbs and organs."<sup>240</sup> He stated, "The mind rises gradually from inferior to superior."<sup>241</sup> Smith considered that apex of understanding the Divine to be thus "a pure spirit, omniscient, and omnipresent."<sup>242</sup>

In addition to the fact that Lincoln was acquainted with Smith's book, it is reasonable to suggest that Smith's preaching, which Lincoln regularly experienced and indeed admired,<sup>243</sup> would have strongly reflected the views expressed in Smith's substantial publication. Lincoln would have thus been influenced in some measure by this elevated concept of God's omnipresence, through Smith's use of the Bible. Indeed, Lincoln's Address demonstrated that at a moment of profound expression, he found grounds for optimism in the revelation of the divine attribute of omnipresence. He not only derived comfort from the fact that the omnipresent God would always be with him, but also valued the link between divine omnipresence and omniscience.

Lincoln's remark on divine omnipresence, that God would "go with me,"<sup>244</sup> was preceded by the contextual phrase "Trusting in Him who can."<sup>245</sup> The trust of Lincoln is not a general sense of well-being derived from his belief that God will accompany him. His reflection of omnipresence also carried a sense of enabling, as well as guidance. The wider context of the Address was the enormity of the President duties before him.

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<sup>238</sup> "Dr Smith, as the book showed, had himself been a doubter, but had become convinced of the truth of the Christian religion, and had become a valiant defender of the faith, and an eager debater with sceptics." Barton, *Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, 156.

<sup>239</sup> Lewis, "Religion of Lincoln."

<sup>240</sup> Smith, *Christian's Defence*, 25.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>243</sup> Barton obtained documents from Jeanette E. Smith, Dr Smith's granddaughter. Barton's research provides an example of Lincoln's exposure to, and admiration for, Smith preaching. Smith's, "sermon on 'The bottle, its evils and its remedy,' from Habakkuk 2:15, was preached on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1853, and printed at the request of thirty-nine men who heard it, Abraham Lincoln being one of those who signed the request." Barton, *Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, 157.

<sup>244</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 190.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

Lincoln approached the issue of internal faction with a strong political and ethical philosophy, but he was not a man armed with a detailed manifesto. In many ways, his great strength would lie in his ability to react positively to situations as they unfurled. His now famous comment to Hodges, in 1864, supports this perception as he concluded, “I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me.”<sup>246</sup> Lincoln had no premeditated polished answers or immediate solutions, but he carried the Bible’s assurance that the omnipresent, omnipotent God would not only accompany him, but enable and guide him: “who can go with me, and remain with you and be every where for good.”<sup>247</sup> The sentence that begins with the word ‘trusting,’ concluded with this exhortation: “let us confidently hope that all will yet be well.”<sup>248</sup> Lincoln’s reflection on divine omnipresence and omniscience conveyed the possibility of a desirable solution to the nation’s darkest hour. It is interesting that both Lincoln and the man who conducted the funeral of the son lamented in the Address<sup>249</sup> were both influenced by the Bible’s teaching on these divine attributes.

#### **4.5.1.2.3. The President-Elect’s request for prayer**

Lincoln concluded the Address with a request and promise regarding the issue of prayer. In terms of assessing whether Lincoln really did desire, or even considered that he needed the prayers of his neighbours and friends in Springfield, Herndon had an interesting perspective. In characteristic fashion, He projected his own strongly held religious views onto Lincoln posthumously.<sup>250</sup> He mused:

Did Mr. Lincoln believe in prayer as a means of moving God? ... These expressions are merely conventional. They do not prove that Mr. Lincoln believed that prayer is a means of moving God.<sup>251</sup>

There will be future treatment of the issue of Lincoln requesting prayer on a national level, in Chapter Six of this thesis. However, at this point, it is sufficient to note that Lincoln concluded this Address with both a request for and promise to pray.

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid., *Vol. 7*. 283.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., *Vol. 4*. 190.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> "Here my children were born, and one is buried." Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> In Section 6.6 of this thesis, new information on Herndon’s attitude to the Bible, and Lincoln’s of it, will be examined.

<sup>251</sup> Pennell, *Religious Views*, Locations 299-304

#### 4.5.1.3. Scholarly consideration

The opinions conveyed in some of the more important Lincoln works are examined here. Marty presents an argument advising the reader not to “...read too much” into the Language of The Address.<sup>252</sup> He considered that far from being spontaneous and deeply felt, Lincoln’s rhetoric was cynically calculated to help “...establish him as a friend to morality and displayed his readiness to let people think of this non-church member as a Christian.”<sup>253</sup> This thought is not without sympathy amongst historians who have entertained the possibility that Lincoln was attempting to endear himself to a Christian populace. The wider possibility of this argument will be considered in further Lincoln addresses, as the thesis progress through his career. In this particular Address, the overwhelming opinion that Lincoln’s deliver was spontaneous and uncharacteristically emotional would create serious problems for Marty’s contention.

Kaplan’s considerations of Lincoln as a writer offer a brief, but rather bold assertion concerning the language of the Address. He refers to Lincoln’s invocation of the Divine being as a “deistic motif ... as compatible with ... his own non-Christian beliefs.”<sup>254</sup> Kaplan does not consider the Bible as a noteworthy source in this Address; he rather contends for the notion that Lincoln drew inspiration from his favourite poetry: “The speech echoes some of his favourite poetry and its theme of mutability, the loss and bereavement that time brings.”<sup>255</sup> Kaplan’s primary reason for dismissing the Bible as a major source lies in what he considers to be Lincoln’s rather general ascriptions for God. It is true that the term the ‘Divine being’ is a vague term in contrast with titles such as Jehovah<sup>256</sup> or Christ,<sup>257</sup> elsewhere used by Lincoln. Kaplan is correct to instigate debate around Lincoln’s divine ascriptions; however, this exclusive concentration upon the use of “Divine being” has negated meaningful consideration of the strong possibility of other biblical themes in the Address.

In a book devoted to Lincoln’s skill with the use of the written and spoken word, Wilson selected Lincoln’s Address as the starting place in what he described as an investigation of *The Presidency and the Power of words*.<sup>258</sup> He describes Lincoln

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<sup>252</sup> Martin Marty, *The War-Time Lincoln and the Ironic Tradition in America*. 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Robert Fortenbaugh Memorial Lecture (Gettysburg: Gettysburg College, 2001), 20.

<sup>253</sup> Marty, *War-Time Lincoln*, 21.

<sup>254</sup> Fred Kaplan, *Lincoln: The Biography of a Writer* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008) Kindle edition, Location 5409-15.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> The Speech at Columbus Ohio, 16<sup>th</sup> September 1859. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3. 410.

<sup>257</sup> Fragment: Niagara Falls, 25<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> September 1848. Ibid., Vol. 2. 10.

<sup>258</sup> Wilson, *Lincoln’s Sword*.

as delivering the Address in an emotional and spontaneous moment.<sup>259</sup> Wilson clearly recognised the unique nature of this occasion and concludes that the Address “...had been a great success.”<sup>260</sup> In a book consisting of 196 pages, he devotes only eight and a half pages to the Address. Wilson devotes six of these pages to the examination of the CW versions of Lincoln’s texts to establish which one was closest to Lincoln actual presentation. He then briefly addressed Lincoln’s comparison of his own task with that of Washington.<sup>261</sup> Wilson’s only allusion to Lincoln’s use of the Bible is a brief consideration of the discourse on divine assistance, which he employs purely to demonstrate a stylistic point of language.<sup>262</sup>

In his introductory essay, Wilson speaks of the power of Lincoln’s writing, concluding that “Lincoln’s presidential writing proved to be timely, engaging, consistently lucid, compelling in argument, and most important of all, invested with memorable and even inspiring language.”<sup>263</sup> He continues to eulogise the power of Lincoln’s use of language, which he considered had “ a decisive effect in shaping public attitudes and was a telling factor in the success of his policies.”<sup>264</sup> He acknowledges that Lincoln is revered in historical memory for his power as a speaker and writer. Wilson rightly concludes thus: “To explore Lincoln’s Presidential writing is to create, in effect, a window on his presidency and a key to his accomplishments.”<sup>265</sup> Wilson’s appreciation of the importance of Lincoln’s compositions and his perception that to understand what Lincoln wrote is to understand the man himself, have driven him to produce some thorough and penetrating conclusions. However, in his treatment of this Address, Wilson almost ignores the fact that a genuine case can be made to indicate that as much as one third of the text is related to, and possibly even inspired, by the text and message of the King James Bible.

It is a matter of almost unanimous record that Thomas’ biography of Lincoln is one finest of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Indeed, Burlingame’s introductory essay in the 2008 reprinting of this work offered the following endorsement: “Published over half a

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<sup>259</sup> Wilson acknowledges both that Lincoln’s display was emotional and that as such it was almost singular for Lincoln, describing it as “Lincoln’s rare display of emotion.” *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

century ago, Benjamin P. Thomas' *Abraham Lincoln* ... remains the best single-volume life of the sixteenth president."<sup>266</sup> In this biography, Thomas briefly described the scene of Lincoln's departure from Springfield and furnished a complete quotation of Lincoln's Farewell Address. It is interesting that such a fine volume should provide an entire text of this Address without offering any comment on Lincoln's possible use of the Bible.

In the same year that he composed the introductory essay for Thomas' reprint, Burlingame himself published his masterful two-volume biography of Lincoln. Burlingame proclaims the Address to be "one of the most affecting of his prose masterpieces."<sup>267</sup> Notwithstanding this endorsement, Burlingame devotes only one page to the scene at the Springfield Railroad Depot, concentrating entirely on the profound nature of the occasion. Having placed the oratory in the highest of categories, Burlingame curiously chose not to examine the content, or offer any treatment of the possibility of Lincoln's use of biblical echoes therein. The scale of Burlingame's biography and his impressive attention to detail could lead the reader to expect that some consideration of Lincoln's use of the Bible in this unique Address might have been in order.

Burlingame is not alone in his approach to this subject. Some of the most celebrated Lincoln biographies offer similarly scant treatment of Lincoln's inspiration for this Address. Charnwood,<sup>268</sup> Oates,<sup>269</sup> and Donald<sup>270</sup> offer barely a page on the events of 11<sup>th</sup> February 1861. All acknowledge the profundity and emotion of the occasion, and they all esteem Lincoln's words by submitting a full quotation of the Address. Each of these biographies forgoes the unique opportunity to study Lincoln's words in the unfamiliar context of this Address. Never again would Lincoln so powerfully speak without preparation, and with such visible emotion. All these authors were aware of the importance that history has placed on Lincoln's Address, without offering examination of Lincoln's inspiration, especially his use of the Bible. It is possible that the wider agenda of these works did not naturally offer the scope to do so, but the fact stands that examination of this matter is of value in understanding Lincoln and his work.

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<sup>266</sup> Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*, xi.

<sup>267</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 1. 758.

<sup>268</sup> Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, 149-150.

<sup>269</sup> Oates, *Malice Toward None*, 209.

<sup>270</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 273.

In his work *Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President*,<sup>271</sup> Guelzo devotes less than a page<sup>272</sup> to the Address. Guelzo's interest in the Address is part of his examination of Lincoln's use of the word 'Providence'. He concludes that this is a calculatedly nebulous expression, chosen by the pragmatic Lincoln to be so vague as to allow an audience to hear what they wanted to hear. Guelzo contests that the both the devout and the agnostic could relate to the term that he describes as possessing a "certain slipperiness that was already available in Protestant thinking."<sup>273</sup> Guelzo also provides his reader with a complete text of the Address. He concludes his use of the Address by drawing attention to Lincoln's use of the term 'Divine Being.' He considers this to be '...a bloodless way of speaking about God, on a par with the conventional deistic preference for speaking of God.'<sup>274</sup>

Guelzo has provided important contribution to the debate on Lincoln's faith, and his suggestions on the ascriptions of for God are well argued. However, his belief that the nuances of Lincoln's language contain keys to the truth of his personal beliefs has not extended to the wider use of Lincoln's possible engagement with the Bible, in the Address. Guelzo's proposition that Lincoln's use of the Bible is simply an indication of his personal deist beliefs will be examined in Section 5.2 of this thesis. Guelzo is generally unconvinced about Lincoln's apparent belief in the effectiveness of prayer, despite contemporary witness testimony to the contrary. For example, Logan<sup>275</sup> remarked on the statement of General Rusling,<sup>276</sup> who reported Lincoln telling General Sickles<sup>277</sup> that he was at peace about the outcome of the Battle of Gettysburg; "He retired to his room, and getting down on his knees had prayed to Almighty God for victory."<sup>278</sup> Logan pointed out that the Rusling account was verified in an 1891 letter from Sickles to a friend and neighbour of Lincoln's, R.W.

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<sup>271</sup> Guelzo, *Redeemer President*.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 319-320.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, 320.

<sup>275</sup> In 1909 Rev Thomas D. Logan delivered the main address at the Lincoln Centennial Celebrations in Springfield, in the church attended by the Lincoln family in the 1850's. *Lincoln Centennial Addresses: Delivered at the Memorial Exercises, held at Springfield, Illinois February 12, 1909* (Published by the Illinois Centennial Commission). Rusling also recorded this incident. James F. Rusling, *Men and Things I Saw in Civil War Days* (New York and Cincinnati: The Methodist Book Concern, 1914), 15.

<sup>276</sup> James Fowler Rusling (1834-1918) served during the War as a Brigadier General (Brevet) in the Union Army. Rusling, *Men and Things*, 4.

<sup>277</sup> Major General Daniel Edgar Sickles (1819- 1914) was a controversial New York City lawyer and politician. He commanded with both distinction and notoriety during the War. James A. Hessler, *Sickles at Gettysburg* (New York: Savas Beatie LLC, 2010); Wilmer L. Jones, *Generals in Blue and Gray: Lincoln's Generals*. Vol. 1. (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2006), 183-184.

<sup>278</sup> *Lincoln Centennial Addresses*, 153-154.

Diller.<sup>279</sup> This provides a substantial testimony in support of Lincoln's belief in prayer and his willingness to speak of it, as he did in his Farewell Address.

Wolf's assessment of the Address is that it marked a moment of progress in Lincoln's spiritual development. He concluded that Lincoln's text exhibited "...a faith in God who is personally and intimately concerned for every man and who providentially brings to pass His designs for good in man's history."<sup>280</sup> Reference has already been made to Logan's Centennial Address in Springfield. During this oration, Logan reflected upon the nature of Lincoln's worship in Springfield's First Presbyterian Church. He addressed the accusation that Lincoln may not have been a sincere worshipper; that his attendance at that very church was simply for other reasons of social and political expedience. Logan submitted a complete recitation of Lincoln's Farewell Address as part of his rebuttal of this claim.<sup>281</sup> He concluded that the majority of the audience knew him well and "... none questioned the sincerity of his Christian belief."<sup>282</sup> Macartney's considered it unthinkable that "... in so grave a crisis in the history of the nation and in his own life he pretended, for the sake of public policy, to speak the language of a faith which he himself did not hold."<sup>283</sup>

There are a number of significant modern works that attempt to understand Lincoln more fully by examining aspects of the spiritual aspect of his life, and all acknowledge as a matter of fact that Lincoln used the Bible in his speeches and writings. There is a gap in the field of study, due in the most part, to the fact that the authors do not appear to chosen to engage in detail with Lincoln's possible use of the Bible. The vast majority of well-respected scholarship states that Lincoln used the Bible in this Address, but there is an almost complete lack of engagement therewith. Another particular example is Anderson, in his work *Abraham Lincoln: God's Humble Instrument*. Such a title suggests an investigation of the importance of faith and the Bible in Lincoln's career, and yet Anderson only offers a thirteen-word examination of the Address: "Lincoln chose to speak of his love for his friends and his maker."<sup>284</sup> In order to offer further understanding of Lincoln's beliefs, both

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<sup>279</sup> Sickles told Diller that, "I could not after so many years verify all the details of his narrative, but it is substantially confirmed by my recollection of the conversation." *Lincoln Centennial Addresses*, 154.

<sup>280</sup> Wolf, *Almost Chosen People*, 113.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 151-152.

<sup>282</sup> "bade farewell to Springfield, none questioned the sincerity of his Christian belief." *Lincoln Centennial Addresses*, 151.

<sup>283</sup> Macartney, *Lincoln and the Bible*, 38.

<sup>284</sup> Andersen, *God's Humble Instrument*, Locations 2098-2106.



personally and politically, his engagement with the Bible is being investigated in this thesis.

#### 4.5.1.4. Conclusion to Lincoln's Farewell Address

The people who heard Lincoln deliver the Address appear to have accepted his message and its sentiment, as being a genuine indication of Lincoln's inner feelings and beliefs.<sup>285</sup> Humphrey concluded that "To the Springfield people, Lincoln never spoke with more touching eloquence."<sup>286</sup> John Nicolay's daughter Helen considered this to be a "matchless speech of farewell."<sup>287</sup> His Address is remembered and celebrated in American memory as an important part of the essential body of Lincoln's work. Holzer's assessment of Lincoln's final words in Springfield is worthy of extended quotation:

Read correctly they signalled not only a suddenly manifested submission to fate, but a new recruitment of God's will to support the people's will – namely, his lawful election to the presidency. If God desired it – and Lincoln implied that He would – all would yet be well among mortals acting in His name.<sup>288</sup>

Without the Bible, the Address simply would not have existed in a recognisable fashion; indeed, Holzer considers that for Lincoln, the choice of language was *unprecedented*.<sup>289</sup> Lincoln could certainly have delivered a farewell address without any recourse to Bible whatsoever. Had he done so, its content would have been so dramatically different that it would have been a rather different piece. The vast majority of scholarly treatment accepts the contention that this was both spontaneous and heartfelt. When Lincoln spoke from the heart on this occasion, the contention of this thesis is that did so with the influence of his engagement with the Bible.

#### 4.6. Conclusion to Chapter Four

Lincoln's political fortunes changed beyond all recognition between 1858 and 1860. The Debates with Douglas and the Cooper Union Address would pave the way to the

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<sup>285</sup> Pennell, *Religious Views*, 16.

<sup>286</sup> Mark E. Humphrey, "Springfield of the Lincolns." *Abraham Lincoln Association Papers*, February 1929, 41.

<sup>287</sup> Helen Nicolay, "A Candidate in His Home Town." *The Abraham Lincoln Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (1940): 143.

<sup>288</sup> Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 303.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*

Republican nomination and the Presidency. It can be argued that Lincoln's use of the Bible during this period is both skilful and imaginative, and on occasions important to the delivery of his political message. The House Divided Speech set the tone for Lincoln's election to the highest office, but his defence of its content would colour the Debates with Douglas. The Farewell Address delivered during Lincoln's last minutes in Springfield offers unique insights into Lincoln's thinking, and there is reason to suggest that the Bible influenced it.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE COMMENCEMENT OF LINCOLN'S TENURE

#### 5.1. Introduction

This chapter will cover the final period of Lincoln's tenure as President-Elect and move the narrative into the first three years of the Presidency. Some noted scholars have highlighted certain aspects of Lincoln's language in order to create stimulating discussion regarding the contention that Lincoln leaned towards apparent deism in his belief system. The comparatively recently renewed interest in this issue warrants some consideration in order to more fully understand Lincoln's engagement with the Bible. Lincoln delivered his Farewell Address and commenced his grueling rail journey from Springfield to Washington. Examination will be undertaken of Lincoln's public address during this journey. Lincoln's first Inaugural Address contained a limited measure of biblical material, which will be inspected. The context of all Lincoln's political speeches and writings was the War, a brief narrative of which will be offered in the context of his Presidency. Lincoln's varied political speeches and writings will be examined to ascertain what place the Bible occupied in his compositions as he sought to deliver leadership during this season of national crisis.

#### 5.2. Lincoln and Deism

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the place of the Bible in Lincoln's political speeches and writings. There is, however, the need to briefly examine an aspect of Lincoln's personal belief. A number of important scholars, both recent and distant, have suggested that Lincoln's use of biblical language displayed a deistic tendency. It is therefore of value to examine the veracity of this assertion in the interests of accurately comprehending Lincoln's use of the Bible.

##### 5.2.1. Lincoln and American Deism

The term 'deism' is somewhat nebulous and therefore difficult to define. American deism was ambiguous in definition, in the same way that it had been in European thought.<sup>1</sup> The *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* defines deism thus: "a belief in God

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<sup>1</sup> E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) Kindle edition, 161.

established by reason and evidence... without acceptance of the special information supposedly revealed in ... the Bible.”<sup>2</sup> The most important assessment in this article is that deism “involves a belief in a creator who has established the universe and its processes but does not respond to human prayer or need.”<sup>3</sup>

Allen Jayne offers this appraisal on Lincoln: “privately he was a religious radical.”<sup>4</sup> In his chapter entitled ‘Lincoln, deism and the Declaration of Independence’, he presents his case for Lincoln being a Deist. This thesis will continue to demonstrate that Lincoln was not necessarily conventional in his use of the Bible. However, Jayne’s assertion that Lincoln’s views belong to the same family as Jefferson, Paine and Parker<sup>5</sup> can only be sustained by avoiding the implications of the actual biblical texts he employed. Jayne’s contention is that Lincoln deliberately sought to mask his radical Deist views through quotation of scripture. His suggestion that if Lincoln were a deist he would have been considered a radical is not necessarily a foregone conclusion. In order to assess Jayne’s submission it is important to note that prominent 19<sup>th</sup> Century American Deists were, in the most part, accepted as central figures in their contemporary political society. Prominent examples of this are Thomas Paine, who published *The Age of Reason* 66 years before Lincoln’s Presidency,<sup>6</sup> President Thomas Jefferson,<sup>7</sup> and Theodore Parker, who enjoyed an illustrious career in American public life during the Antebellum.<sup>8</sup> Even if Lincoln did hold Deistic beliefs, this would not have been considered so radical that it required concealing. If Jayne’s contention were the case there would be evidence of those listed, especially Jefferson, quoting the Bible to deflect attention away from their deist views; this was not the case.

When Lincoln was at his most politically active, American deism was not a new phenomenon. An example of the extent of American Deistic thinking is found in

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<sup>2</sup> Honderich, *Philosophy*, 182.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Allen Jayne, *Lincoln and the American Manifesto* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2007) Kindle edition, 67.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason: In Two Parts* (London: J.S. Jordan, 1794/1795. Reprint, New York: G.N. Devries, 1827), ii.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) served two terms as the third US President of the United States. Francis D. Cogliano, *Thomas Jefferson: Reputation and Legacy* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Theodore Parker (1810-1860) was a scholar, public speaker and social reformer, with particular interest in the rights of woman and the abolition of chattel slavery. Dean Grodzins, *American Heretic: Theodore Parker and Transcendentalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

an article about Charles Pettigrew.<sup>9</sup> This self-made planter and cleric had the distinction of serving on the first Board of Trustees for the University of North Carolina.<sup>10</sup> Six decades before Lincoln became President, Pettigrew described deism as being ‘rampant’ in the University.<sup>11</sup> There was no obvious occasion during the Antebellum in which North Carolina could be judiciously considered as a bastion of liberal thinking. If, in the earliest days of America’s first State University<sup>12</sup>, deism were so visible, Lincoln would surely not have been required to conceal such thoughts had he subscribed to them.

### 5.2.2. Lincoln and Deistic terminology

It has already been stated that scholastic interest in the possibility of Lincoln holding deistic beliefs is centred on his designations for God. Matthew Holland addresses himself to Lincoln’s use of the term ‘Divine Being’ in the Farewell Address, and acknowledges Guelzo’s reference to Lincoln’s suggested deism. He proceeds to submit his indictment of such views, pointing out that Lincoln mentioned God, or identified himself and the American people with Christianity, several times.<sup>13</sup> He correctly asserts that Lincoln’s remarks at Steubenville were inconsistent with deism,<sup>14</sup> speaking of God, Lincoln stated “without whose aid we can do nothing.”<sup>15</sup> A central concept of deism was that God did not directly intervene in human affairs; it is therefore unlikely that Lincoln would speak of God’s aid if he were a deist. This theory would suggest that Lincoln was duplicitous, capable of stating passionately and emotionally<sup>16</sup> a belief in a theological position to which he was personally opposed.

One feature of the debate surrounding Lincoln and deism is the coincidentally shared bicentennial of Lincoln and Charles Darwin. Historians have noted that

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Pettigrew (1744-1807) was a clergyman, self-made planter and an educator. William S. Powell, ed. *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> William R. Davie introduced a bill to the North Carolina General Assembly, in Fayetteville, on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1789. [www.museum.unc.edu/](http://www.museum.unc.edu/) The University of North Carolina website, accessed 10<sup>th</sup> July 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew S. Holland, *Bonds of Affection: Civic Charity and the Making of America-Winthrop, Jefferson, and Lincoln* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2007) Kindle edition, Location 2763.

<sup>14</sup> Holland, *Bonds of Affection*, Location 2763.

<sup>15</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 207.

<sup>16</sup> Lincoln’s Farewell Address at Springfield was delivered with passion and uncharacteristic personal emotion, as stated in Section 4.5.1.1 of this thesis.

Lincoln and the naturalist shared the same date of birth.<sup>17</sup> These influential men would conduct very diverse careers on different continents, and yet recent publications have sought to draw comparisons.<sup>18</sup> Lander submits a comparison between the two men, in which he stated that Lincoln tended towards deism, citing what he perceived to be the influence of the Volney.<sup>19</sup> Lander refers to Lincoln's lost paper on infidelity as the sole source for these claims.<sup>20</sup> He also discusses Lincoln's association with Reverend Smith.<sup>21</sup> He spoke of the Lincolns' regular attendance at Smith's church and concedes "Lincoln could find much to admire in Reverend Smith."<sup>22</sup> He states that Lincoln owned a copy of Smith's book *In Defence of Christianity*, even pointing out that Smith was actually a convert from deism to Christianity.<sup>23</sup> Despite his appreciation of the latter, Lander's conclusion is that there is apparently "no evidence"<sup>24</sup> that Smith influenced Lincoln at all. He states that it was Volney who influenced Lincoln.

Szasz provides thorough treatment of Lincoln and Smith's interaction. He makes the point that Lincoln read some of Smith's book while visiting family in Kentucky, and obtained a copy upon his return to Springfield.<sup>25</sup> He records the testimony of Smith who recalled that Lincoln concluded an address to the Bible Society of Springfield "by saying that the Bible contained a divinely inspired, perfect moral code, applicable to all conditions of life."<sup>26</sup> He makes the point that many historians ignore the influential nature of Smith's relationship with Lincoln, instead trusting Herndon's questionable reflections. Szasz considered that some modern scholars have examined deistic sources at the expense of the Bible. He concluded that

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas F. Glick, *What About Darwin: All Species of Opinion from Scientists, Sages, Friends, and Enemies Who Met, Read and Discussed the Naturalist Who Changed the World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 250.

<sup>18</sup> James Lander, *Lincoln and Darwin: Shared Visions of Race, Science, and Religion* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010); David R. Contosta, *Rebel Giants: The Revolutionary Lives of Abraham Lincoln and Charles Darwin* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2008); Adam Gopnik, *Angels and Ages: A Short Book about Darwin, Lincoln and Modern Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> Lander, *Lincoln and Darwin*, 44.

<sup>20</sup> The subject of Lincoln writing on and possible tendency towards *infidelity* has been examined and discussed in [Section 2.4.2](#) of this thesis.

<sup>21</sup> Reverend James Smith, his writing, association, and possible influence on Lincoln has been presented already in [Section 4.5.1.2.5.1](#) of this thesis.

<sup>22</sup> Lander, *Lincoln and Darwin*, 67.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Ferenc M. Szasz, *Abraham Lincoln and Robert Burns: Connected Lives and Legends* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 96.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

Lincoln's appreciation of the inspiration and value of the Bible might actually be "more accurate than historians have supposed."<sup>27</sup>

### 5.2.3. Collis and Ingersoll

Scholarly concentration on the possibility that Lincoln's language was inspired by Deistic beliefs is by no means an exclusively recent phenomenon. The argument being rehearsed in this section can be seen in the correspondence between Collis<sup>28</sup> and Ingersoll<sup>29</sup> during the latter years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Ingersoll sought to establish that Lincoln's thinking was liberated from what he saw as the confines of orthodox Christianity. On 12<sup>th</sup> February 1893 he delivered a lecture on 'The Life of Lincoln' in which he addressed the issue of Lincoln's beliefs. Collis was in attendance and expressed in writing his contention to Ingersoll. There followed a frank postal exchange that Collis felt constrained to publish "because I am constantly asked for copies of it."<sup>30</sup> Collis appeared to have appreciated Ingersoll's observations on Lincoln;<sup>31</sup> however, he wrote to Ingersoll objecting to his assertion that "Lincoln's religion was the religion of Voltaire and Tom Paine."<sup>32</sup> Collis claims to have known Lincoln personally,<sup>33</sup> and understood that "the record"<sup>34</sup> of Lincoln's words testified against Ingersoll.

The correspondence between the two veterans commenced with Collis, who stated his objection to associating Lincoln's religion to that of the Deists. His primary

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Charles H.T. Collis (1838 -1902) was a lawyer and Union Major General during the War. Bud Hannings, *Everyday of the Civil War: A Chronological Encyclopaedia* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company Inc., 2010), 562; Dale Fetzer and Bruce E. Mowday, *Unlikely Allies: Fort Delaware's Prison Community in the Civil War*. (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2000), 44; [www.gettysburg.stonesentinels.com/Individuals/Collis.php](http://www.gettysburg.stonesentinels.com/Individuals/Collis.php), accessed 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Robert G. Ingersoll (1833-1899) was a lawyer and a Union Colonel during the War. He became a renowned itinerant lecturer on religious topics. J.T. Harrison, *Ingersoll's Mistakes of Moses Exposed and Refuted* (Saint Paul: Dispatch Job Printing Co., 1896, 592; Henry W. Bowden, *Dictionary of American Religious Biography* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993), 263; Timothy L. Hall, *American Religious Leaders* (New York: Facts on File Inc., 2003), 181-182; Jan Pinkerton, and Randolph H. Hudson, *Encyclopedia of the Chicago Literary Renaissance: The Essential Guide to the Lives and Works of the Chicago Renaissance Writers* (New York: Facts on File Inc., 2004), 176-175.

<sup>30</sup> Charles H.T. Collis, ed. *The Religion of Abraham Lincoln: Correspondence Between General Charles H.T. Collis and Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll* (New York: G.W. Dillingham Company, 1900) Kindle edition, Location 2-16.

<sup>31</sup> "I thank you sincerely for all that was good in it (Ingersoll's lecture on Lincoln)." Ibid., Location 16.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Collis claimed that his authority to challenge Ingersoll's assumptions about Lincoln's religious beliefs came from the fact that he had "an intimate acquaintance with him (Lincoln) in Washington, in the army hospitals, and at the front during the days immediately preceding General Lee's surrender and Mr. Lincoln's untimely taking." Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

complaint against Ingersoll's statement is that Lincoln's use of the Bible was not deistic, and that if he had been a deist, as Voltaire and Paine famously were, then "Lincoln himself was untrue."<sup>35</sup> Collis asserted that Lincoln publicly invoked God's blessing in a way that was clearly not directed at a deistic understanding of the deity.<sup>36</sup> It is interesting to note that Collis was not recording his objection to promote a theological agenda.

I do not write this in defence of his religion or as objecting to yours, but I think it were better for the truth of history that you should blame him for what he was than commend him for what he was not.<sup>37</sup>

Ingersoll's reply rather sidestepped Collis' argument. He emphasised the fact that Voltaire was a believer in God, and appeared to minimise the chasm between deistic and theistic belief. Ingersoll wrote:

The deists believe in an infinite being, who created and preserves the universe. The Christians believe no more. Deists and Christians believe in the same God, but they differ as to what this God has done, and as to what this God will do.<sup>38</sup>

It was disingenuous of Ingersoll to suggest that the main issue was belief in supreme deity. Indeed Ingersoll's line of argument could have easily applied to the religion of the Native American Indians. For example the Wailaki Tribe were almost animistic in their belief that spirits were present in all objects, but they believed in the Katanagai, which is translated as 'night traveller', the creator God.<sup>39</sup> Ingersoll's assertion that "Deists believe in an infinite being, which created and preserves the universe"<sup>40</sup> could equally be associated with the beliefs of the Wailaki, who could also have subscribed to Ingersoll's rather imprecise statement.

In quoting Lincoln, Collis began by furnishing a lengthy excerpt from the Farewell Address at Springfield. Collis cited several addresses delivered to church leaders and concluded that if Lincoln was a deist, he was also publically dishonest.

You must not proclaim Lincoln's honesty in one sentence and ask us in another to believe that his real faith (was that of Voltaire's). Nor must you

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., Location 34.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., Location 34.

<sup>39</sup> Barry M. Pritzker, *Native Americans: An Encyclopedia of History, Culture and Peoples* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO Inc., 1998), 203.

<sup>40</sup> Collis, *The Religion of Abraham Lincoln*, Location 45.



expect us to couple the man who ... exclaims 'God bless the churches,'  
with him who shibboleth of malignant hate was *Ecrasez L'infame*.<sup>41</sup>

Voltaire often finished his letters with the phrase 'Ecrasez l'infame', which translates as "Crush the wretch/infamous thing".<sup>42</sup> The 'wretch' was the Catholic Church, which Voltaire wrote in fierce opposition to.<sup>43</sup> If Lincoln was a deist, or even if he was closer to deism than Christianity, then an important body of his writing and speeches are deliberately designed to deceive the audience into thinking that he was something other than he knew himself to be.

The fundamental issue for Collis, as he stated, was not the supremacy of Christianity over deism. The issue was not even a discussion on the value judgement whether it was meritorious for Lincoln to have been a deist or a Christian. The central issue was what impression did Lincoln deliver to the American public regarding his faith and attitude to the Bible? Collis asserted that if Lincoln's was the faith of Voltaire, Paine, Volney or any other deist, then he deliberately misled the American people at a time of national emergency. Kaplan wrote in consideration of Lincoln's religious influences and drew similar conclusions to Ingersoll. Citing Paine and Voltaire, he claims that, between 1832 and 1836, deist thought heavily influenced Lincoln,<sup>44</sup> and this became his personal doctrine for the rest of his life. Indeed, twice on the same page he plainly implies that Lincoln has deistic leanings, namely that he "found convincing arguments against the intercession of God in human affairs."<sup>45</sup> Kaplan offers the following unequivocal claims regarding this matter:

Deeply versed in the Bible, he rejected the literal truth of supernatural claims ... The biblical tone and language always remained part of him, available for reference and citation. But if there were a God, Lincoln had come to believe, He neither interfered in the processes of nature nor interceded in the affairs of men.<sup>46</sup>

He presents his contention that Lincoln found "convincing arguments against the intercession of God in human affairs"<sup>47</sup> in the writings of Paine, Volney and Voltaire.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., Location 138.

<sup>42</sup> [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary) Webster's Dictionary, accessed 17<sup>th</sup> May 2011.

<sup>43</sup> Gary Wills, *Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit* (New York: Doubleday, 2000); Paul Cliteur, *The Secular Outlook: In Defence of Political Secularism* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 72-74.

<sup>44</sup> Kaplan, *Biography of a Writer*, 70.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

Kaplan examined Lincoln as a writer, and states that Lincoln merely used the Bible as a source book of quotations and anecdotes.

Collis' conclusion to his 21<sup>st</sup> February letter, although written over 100 years ago, may serve as a salutary caution to the arguments presented in support of Lincoln as a deist: "you can no more easily make Lincoln a Deist than I can make Voltaire a Christian."<sup>48</sup>

### **5.3. Lincoln's rail journey to Washington**

This extended journey afforded Lincoln the first opportunity since winning the Republican nomination to address the public. His remarks will be examined to ascertain any contribution of the Bible to his wording.

#### **5.3.1. Lincoln's journey**

The President-Elect's train departed the Great Western Railway Depot in Springfield, Illinois, on the morning of Monday 11<sup>th</sup> February 1861.<sup>49</sup> Lincoln would travel to Washington in a specially chartered train along an indirect route of 1,900 miles.<sup>50</sup> The route included a number of stops, which afforded Lincoln maximum exposure to the public at a time of public concern. Chase expressed the collective Republican ambition for the journey: "It is important to allow full scope to the enthusiasm of the people just now."<sup>51</sup>

Chase's expectation of euphoria would be endorsed as the Presidential express rolled through the Northern States of America. Effusive throngs greeted Lincoln,<sup>52</sup> as well as what Hay described as non-partisan<sup>53</sup> civic welcomes in each location. It is important in establishing the context of Lincoln's journey to Washington, and to record the fact that Lincoln also received some unfavourable media coverage.<sup>54</sup> Having remained silent for the campaign and the majority of his tenure as President-Elect, Lincoln now felt able to begin to address the public. This train journey allowed him to conclude "months of public silence with a flurry of speeches foreshadowing

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<sup>48</sup> Collis, *Religion of Abraham Lincoln*, Location 138.

<sup>49</sup> White, *Lincoln*, 365.

<sup>50</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 2. 1.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>52</sup> John Fagant, *The Best of the Bargain: Lincoln in Western New York* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2010) Kindle edition, Location 748; Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 325.

<sup>53</sup> Michael Burlingame, ed. *An Oral History of Abraham Lincoln: John G. Nicolay's Interviews and Essays* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996. Reprint, 2006), 110.

<sup>54</sup> Oates, *Malice Toward None*, 210.

his eagerly awaited inaugural address.”<sup>55</sup> The twelve-day journey<sup>56</sup> would afford Lincoln the opportunity of meeting officials and dignitaries in the states of Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York.<sup>57</sup> Lincoln would eventually arrive at the Baltimore and Ohio Railway Depot, Washington DC, in the early hours of Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1861.<sup>58</sup>

### **5.3.2. Public address during the journey**

The journey was of considerable national interest, which White suggests may have been intensified by the fact that the other President-Elect, Jefferson Davis, was making a similar journey to begin his tenure as President of the newly convening Confederate States of America.<sup>59</sup> The CW contains 73 public addresses by Lincoln during this journey.<sup>60</sup> The CW also records one letter written during the journey,<sup>61</sup> and one newspaper announcement placed by Lincoln himself.<sup>62</sup> In eight<sup>63</sup> of these 73 addresses Lincoln used material that could indicate his use of the Bible.<sup>64</sup> These shall be examined in chronological order.

#### **5.3.2.1. Reply to Oliver P. Morton at Indianapolis**

On the same day as his emotional departure from Springfield, Lincoln delivered this 400-word<sup>65</sup> address. Lincoln made the point, which characterized his intentions for this journey, “while I do not expect, upon this occasion, or any occasion, till after I get to Washington, to attempt any lengthy speech”<sup>66</sup>, but did however use the occasion to commend the citizens of Indianapolis for their commitment to the

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<sup>55</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 2. 2.

<sup>56</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 273.

<sup>57</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 2. 2; T.W. Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed, Including His Autobiography and a Memoir*, Vol. 1. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1884), 605-606.

<sup>58</sup> White, *Lincoln*, 381.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 369.

<sup>60</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 191-245.

<sup>61</sup> Letter written from Lincoln To E.B. Washburne, 15<sup>th</sup> February 1861. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 217.

<sup>62</sup> Lincoln placed an announcement in the Illinois State Journal, 20<sup>th</sup> February 1861. This was a four-line notification regarding Lincoln’s personal business interests. *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>63</sup> It is possible to make a case for nine instead of eight speeches containing Lincoln’s possible engagement with the Bible. The day that he left Springfield he addressed an audience in Lafayette, Indiana with a short oration in which he remarks, “Still we are bound together, I trust in Christianity, civilization, and patriotism.” This is not included in the main text of the thesis because it offers no real insight into the place of the Bible in the political career of the Sixteenth President. *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 191-245.

<sup>65</sup> Word count is taken from an examination of the text as it appears in, *Ibid.*, 193-194.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

preservation of the Union.<sup>67</sup> The applause he gained for this comment was renewed<sup>68</sup> with this remark about the liberty found in the Union: “The gates of hell shall not prevail against them.”<sup>69</sup> Lincoln had concluded his 1838 Lyceum Address with this quotation, which he again employed in connection with the issue of union and freedom.<sup>70</sup>

Lincoln presents this phrase within quotation marks, and his text is almost identical to Mark 16:18. The only difference is that Mark uses ‘it’ while Lincoln substituted ‘them,’ to fit the context of his sentence. The two factors stated suggest that this can be considered as an example of Lincoln employing a direct biblical quotation. In reflection of this usage, Ostergard’s assessment is that Lincoln compared the free citizens of the Republic to the Church.<sup>71</sup> Lincoln was making a passionate point and sought to employ the strongest language available to him, which in his mind would appear to be that of Jesus speaking of the Church. If it is accepted that Lincoln employed a direct quotation from the Bible, this is by no means an assertion that he was using his speeches to promote a religious agenda. Lincoln was always focused on his political objectives, which he saw as righteous, or even Godly. However, it is suggested that he considered the words of the Bible to be most authoritative, and so when he judged that the occasion demanded, Lincoln would use the scriptures in his speeches. This is one such occasion.

### **5.3.2.2 Speech at Cincinnati, Ohio**

On the 12<sup>th</sup> February 1861 Lincoln gave a speech of 971 words<sup>72</sup> in Cincinnati. He spoke simply of his hope that the Republic’s difficulties would resolve with the passage of time.<sup>73</sup> Lincoln directed a conciliatory tone towards those who favoured secession.<sup>74</sup> Lincoln stated his belief that resolution would not only be achieved by the efforts of politicians, but “under the Providence of God, who has never deserted

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Lincoln’s Speech to the Young Men’s Lyceum in Springfield has been examined in Section 2.4.4.2.2 of this thesis. Lincoln spoke of the liberties of the American Republic and employs the Gospel quotation to conclude his address. Ibid., *Vol. 1*. 115.

<sup>71</sup> Ostergard, *Inspired Wisdom*, 121.

<sup>72</sup> Word count is taken from an examination of the text as it appears in the CW. Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 4*. 197-199.

<sup>73</sup> “In a few short years, I and every other individual man who is now living will pass away. I hope that our national difficulties will also pass away.” Ibid., 198.

<sup>74</sup> “If not, then why shall we not, as heretofore, be recognized and acknowledged as brethren again, living in peace and harmony one with another.” Ibid., 199.

us, that we shall again be brethren...<sup>75</sup>. This phrase is largely biblical and is again reminiscent of God's promise to Joshua at the beginning of his great nation building task: "as I was with Moses, I will be with thee: I will not fail thee nor forsake thee."<sup>76</sup> The concept of God's blessing being essential for success is in a sense continued from the Farewell Address.

### **5.3.2.3. Address to the State Legislature, Columbus, Ohio**

On the 13<sup>th</sup> February 1861, Lincoln addressed the Ohio State Legislature. This Address was a concise 359 words.<sup>77</sup> Lincoln echoed the thoughts of his Farewell Address. Firstly he restated his awareness of the enormity of his approaching Presidential assignment.<sup>78</sup> Lincoln echoed his Springfield point, that his task was greater even than that of Washington,<sup>79</sup> and therefore impossible without the support of both "the American people and to that God who has never forsaken them."<sup>80</sup> This theme, which again is lifted from the Farewell Address, is repeated at the end of this piece as Lincoln declared "This most consoling circumstance, and from it we may conclude that all we want is time, patience and a reliance on that God who has never forsaken this people."<sup>81</sup>

It is interesting to note that by his own admission, Lincoln was speaking without preparation: "Fellow citizens, what I have said, I have said altogether extemporaneously, and I will now come to a close."<sup>82</sup> The frantic demands of Lincoln's journey required him to go against his normal practice and speak extemporaneously.<sup>83</sup> The case has already been made that a man at an important season, speaking extemporaneously, may well speak from the heart. Lincoln again evoked his previous remarks on the indispensable nature of divine assistance.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Joshua 1:5.

<sup>77</sup> Word count is taken from an examination of the text as it appears in Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 204-205.

<sup>78</sup> "the very great responsibility rests upon me in the position to which the votes of the American people have called me." Ibid., 204.

<sup>79</sup> "there has fallen upon me a task such as did not rest even upon the Father of his country." Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 204-205.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 202-203.

#### 5.3.2.4. The speech at Steubenville, Ohio

On 14<sup>th</sup> February 1861, Lincoln delivered a brief address of 367 words<sup>84</sup> at Steubenville. Lincoln sought to respond to an address that had been delivered on the nature of the United States Constitution.<sup>85</sup> Lincoln again stated his belief that his good intentions could never be realised without the support of the American people and “the Divine Power, without whose aid we can do nothing.”<sup>86</sup> Lincoln told his Springfield audience, “Without the assistance of that Divine Being, who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. Without that I assistance I cannot fail.”<sup>87</sup> In this Steubenville Address, Lincoln continued to reaffirm that which was suggested to be an allusion to the Bible.

#### 5.3.2.5. The speech at Buffalo, New York

On 16<sup>th</sup> February 1861, Lincoln spoke at Buffalo, and delivered 615 words.<sup>88</sup> Lincoln again acknowledged the difficulties that faced the country, but spoke of the Constitution and the Union offering an optimistic view of the future.<sup>89</sup> Lincoln again appeared to reference his Springfield remarks, in declaring his reliance on God’s help:

I am sure I bring a heart true to the work. For the ability to preform it, I must trust in that Supreme Being, who has never forsaken this favored land ... Without that assistance I shall surely fail. With it I cannot fail.<sup>90</sup>

It is worth stressing again the point that Lincoln does not mention the prospect of God’s help as a luxury; he considered it utterly essential, and expected abject failure without Divine assistance. The fact that Lincoln repeated this aspect of his thinking suggests that even after some short period of reflection, the sentiments he expressed upon departure from Springfield were still prevalent.

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<sup>84</sup> Word count is taken from an examination of the text as it appears in Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 206-207.

<sup>85</sup> “The question is, as to what the Constitution means – ‘What are the rights under the constitution?’” Ibid., 207.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol.4. 190.

<sup>88</sup> Word count is taken from an examination of the text as it appears in Ibid., 220-221.

<sup>89</sup> “And the clouds which now arise in the horizon will be dispelled, and we shall have a bright and glorious future.” Ibid., 221.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 220-221.

### **5.3.2.6. The Address to the State Legislature at Albany**

On 19<sup>th</sup> February 1861 Lincoln delivered a 562-word<sup>91</sup> oration to the State Legislature in Albany, New York. He offered extended thanks to the people of New York for their electoral support and generous welcome. He again spoke of the difficulties ahead, as well as his desire for the good of the entire nation.<sup>92</sup> He concluded his remarks with another endorsement of his Springfield thoughts:

I still have confidence that the Almighty, the Maker of the Universe will, through the instrumentality of this great and intelligent people, bring us through this as He has through all the other difficulties of our country. Relying on this, I again thank you.<sup>93</sup>

### **5.3.2.7. Remarks at Newark, New Jersey**

This tiny discourse at Newark was delivered by Lincoln on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1861, and contained only 71 words.<sup>94</sup> Having thanked the Mayor, he again stated his position of reliance upon God's assistance, once again evoked his words from Springfield: "With my own ability I cannot succeed, without the sustenance of Divine Providence... Without these I cannot hope to succeed; with them I cannot fail."<sup>95</sup> It is interesting to note not only the influence of the Bible upon Lincoln's preparation for office, but also the fact that he appeared to be stating the case for Divine assistance in even stronger terms than he had done in Springfield. Lincoln stated and restated that his position was that which appeared to be informed by the Bible: without Divine assistance he could do nothing.

### **5.3.2.8. The Address to the State Senate at Trenton**

On 21<sup>st</sup> February 1861, Lincoln addressed the New Jersey State Senate, with a 450-word speech.<sup>96</sup> Lincoln continued his theme of the preservation and prosperity of the Union. He utilized New Jersey's role in the American Revolutionary War to illustrate his beliefs.<sup>97</sup> In consideration of the immediate future Lincoln delivered a memorable

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<sup>91</sup> Word count is taken from an examination of the text as it appears in, *Ibid.*, 225-226.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>94</sup> Word count is taken from an examination of the text as it appears in, *Ibid.*, 220-221.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>96</sup> Word count is taken from an examination of the text as it appears in the CW. *Ibid.*, 235-236.

<sup>97</sup> Speaking of the men who fought in the New Jersey Revolutionary campaigns, Lincoln expressed that he was "exceedingly anxious that that thing which they struggled for; that something even more than National Independence; that something that held out a great promise to all the people of the world to all

statement: “and I shall be most happy indeed if I shall be an humble instrument in the hands of the Almighty, and of this, his almost chosen people.”<sup>98</sup>

The Bible contains examples of occasions in which God used and guided those in authority to enact his purposes. This thought is expressed in Proverbs 21:1, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.” Jesus referred to this concept during his discourse with Pilate, in John 19:10-11.

Then Pilate saith unto him, ‘Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have to power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?’ Jesus answered, ‘Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.

Lincoln considered that this was the case for himself, in his impending executive role. He would use the phrase ‘humble instrument’ on three further occasions. He employed the term on two occasions in 1861.<sup>99</sup> Both were in reference to the duty of raising the Union Flag, and Lincoln considered himself a humble instrument in this task. His third usage of this term appeared the following year, in a letter to Eliza Gurney, in which he described himself as, “a humble instrument in the hands of our heavenly father.”<sup>100</sup>

It can be argued that Lincoln’s phrase “his almost chosen people”<sup>101</sup> is evocative of the words of 1 Peter 2:9.

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Ronald White points out that the concept of the American people being considered in some sense to be God’s chosen people had its roots with the Pilgrim Fathers. This developed in a political theme as the American people sought to civilize and democratize the entire continent. In the light of slavery, and the impending possibility of civil war, Lincoln adjusted this to an “almost chosen people.”<sup>102</sup> The cultural issue

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time to come; I am exceedingly anxious that this Union, the Constitution, and the liberties of the people shall be perpetuated in accordance with original idea for which that struggle was made.” Ibid., 236.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Address to the Pennsylvania General Assembly, at Harrisburg, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1861. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 245. Remarks at the raising of the flag over the General Post Office Building, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1861. Ibid., 382.

<sup>100</sup> Reply to Eliza P. Gurney, 26<sup>th</sup> October 1862. Ibid., Vol. 5. 478.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., Vol. 4. 236.

<sup>102</sup> White, *Lincoln*, 377.



of the American Republic having been chosen by God has been referred to in the brief examination of ‘Popular Sovereignty’ and ‘Manifest Destiny.’ It is the contention of this thesis that this cultural phenomenon did influence Lincoln’s choice of language here. However his language contains shared wording and concepts with that of the Peter, and it is submitted Lincoln was employing a biblical allusion to make his point. This is an example of the Bible providing Lincoln with the means to construct a memorable phrase, which enabled him to communicate his message effectively.

### **5.3.3. Conclusion to Lincoln’s rail journey**

These speeches were part of a difficult exercise for Lincoln. He was being personally introduced to an electorate who had very little knowledge of him. The need to make a favourable impression, and to provide leadership at a time of immense national tension, was tempered by the fact that Lincoln could not undermine the incumbent President Buchanan. In addressing the audiences who cheered him to Washington, Lincoln needed, in a sense, to keep his oratorical powder dry by not revealing too much content from his forthcoming Inaugural Address.

Lincoln’s use of the Bible during this journey is small in percentage terms. However, it is significant in that it continued to confirm the possibility that the Bible influenced Lincoln’s thinking. The extent to which this was the case is evidenced in the examples cited in this section, as he revisited the thoughts of his Springfield Address. The journey also furnished historians with two of Lincoln’s memorable phrases, namely his description of the nation as “his almost chosen people,”<sup>103</sup> and that he himself should be “an humble instrument in the hands of the Almighty.”<sup>104</sup> These phrases have been widely quoted by historians since Lincoln’s death; an example is that William Wolf’s *The Almost Chosen People*.

### **5.4. The President-Elect arrived in Washington**

Security concerns necessitated Lincoln’s discreet arrival into Washington.<sup>105</sup> The only person waiting to welcome the President-Elect was his friend Congressman

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<sup>103</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol.4. 236.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 397. The arrival of Lincoln is covered by major biographers in sufficient detail, for example, White, *Lincoln*, Locations 6683-6738; Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 2. Locations 22786-22873.

Washburne.<sup>106</sup> The following nine days<sup>107</sup> saw Lincoln busily introduced to political, civil and military leaders, being somewhat guided through the business by Seward. The reaction of the Capital to Lincoln was a frenetic mix of jubilation, distant observation and outright hostility.<sup>108</sup> The finer details of Lincoln's final activities as President-Elect are important to the historical narrative, but not immediately relevant to the question under consideration in this thesis.

### 5.5. Lincoln's First Inaugural Address

Since the foundation of the Republic it had been the practice of the President-Elect to publically take the oath of office and to present an Inaugural Address to the Public.<sup>109</sup> Lincoln's well-documented tendency for thorough preparation was in evidence during the composition of the Address, indeed the process of preparation extended throughout his tenure as President-Elect.<sup>110</sup> The observation of the development of this text is of great interest in understanding the political career of the sixteenth President; it is of particular interest to note the input of Seward<sup>111</sup> in this matter. However, a protracted discussion of this process is unnecessary for the objects of this thesis.

Lincoln's inauguration took place on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1861.<sup>112</sup> George Washington commenced the practice of taking the Oath of Office, and then delivering an Inaugural Address; however, some 19<sup>th</sup> Century presidents chose to deliver their speech before the Oath.<sup>113</sup> Lincoln delivered his Inaugural Address before he took the Oath of Office. Chief Justice Taney then administered the Oath of Office.<sup>114</sup> Hay and

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<sup>106</sup> Elihu Benjamin Washburne (1816-1887) was a lawyer and prominent Republican Congressman who was one of Lincoln's most prominent supporters in Washington DC.

<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=W000176> accessed 20<sup>th</sup> May 2011.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., Location 6738.

<sup>108</sup> Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, chap. 12.

<sup>109</sup> Paul Johnson, *A History of the American People* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000); James M. McPherson, ed. *To the Best of My Ability: The American Presidents* (New York: Dorling Kindersley Publishing Inc., 2000).

<sup>110</sup> The development of Lincoln's First Inaugural Address is interesting and important in the over all narrative of his political career and is well and thoroughly documented and commented upon in many of the major biographies. For example, Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 3*. Chapter xxi; Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, Chapter 10-13.

<sup>111</sup> Examples of William H. Seward's suggestions and amendments to Lincoln's First Inaugural Address are documented in the following. Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 441; White, *Lincoln*, Locations 6857-6898.

<sup>112</sup> White, *Lincoln*, Location 6788.

<sup>113</sup> <http://inaugural.senate.gov/history/daysevents/inauguraladdress.cfm> Joint committee on Inaugural Ceremonies accessed 30<sup>th</sup> August 2011.

<sup>114</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 2*. Location 23451.

Nicolay remembered the manner of Lincoln's recitation: "with deliberation pronounced the oath."<sup>115</sup> When Lincoln had completed his recitation Burlingame states that he kissed the Bible.<sup>116</sup> The sixteenth, and one of the most celebrated and discussed Presidencies, had begun.

### 5.5.1. The First Inaugural Address: A brief summary

The varied reactions to Lincoln's First Inaugural Address are captured at either ends of the spectrum by Sandburg's research. He quoted the *Baltimore Sun*, which claimed the Address signalled "despotic authority... the design to exercise that authority to any extent of war and bloodshed... the end of hope."<sup>117</sup> This is then compared with the opposite view of Douglas: "It is a peace offering rather than a war message."<sup>118</sup> Lincoln's Address is a work of enormous importance in American history. However, the task of this thesis is to assess the place of the Bible in the political compositions of Lincoln; after a brief introduction, the address will be examined where there are indications of Lincoln's engagement with the Bible.

The political context that Lincoln inherited required a skilful idiom as he sought to remain true to his principle of preserving the Union, without antagonising the already aggravated Southern States. Lincoln delivered 3,687 words to the apprehensive and expectant crowd. He addressed the sectional crisis with the point that this new phenomenon, namely a Republican Administration, presented no deliberate threat to the South or even to the institution of slavery itself.<sup>119</sup> He spoke of the possible dissolution of the Union, and his own task, as one of "great and peculiar difficulty."<sup>120</sup>

Lincoln considered the weight of his imminent Oath of Office, and as Burchard correctly suggests, there was a preeminent thought towering above the myriad that crowded the new President's thinking. "A salient fixture in Lincoln's mind was the Presidential Oath he took to uphold the constitution."<sup>121</sup> She makes the

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<sup>115</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 3.* 344.

<sup>116</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 2.* Location 23451.

<sup>117</sup> Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln*, 215.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 4.* 262-264.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>121</sup> Veronica Burchard, "American Historians," *Magazine of History* 21, no.1 (2007): 29-32.

point that in this Address, Lincoln had to confront the issue of the “nature of the union.”<sup>122</sup> Burchard’s assessment of Lincoln’s thinking is that:

Secession was improper – saying in his First Inaugural Address that while one side could *break* a contract, the approval of both sides was needed to rightfully and justly rescind the contract.<sup>123</sup>

Fornieri also believed that this ideological thinking drove Lincoln’s message, although “Lincoln, however, was no blind ideologue.”<sup>124</sup> Indeed Lincoln understood the possible excesses of the Republic, and his skill was found in that: “Because Lincoln understood both the strengths and weaknesses of democracy, he was able to navigate the fundamental tensions implicit in it.”<sup>125</sup>

Lincoln conceded that the issue of slavery and the expansion of such was a difficult issue: “This, I think, cannot be perfectly cured.”<sup>126</sup> Having made this concession, Lincoln then continued in his insistence on the preservation of the Union: “it would be worse in both cases after the separation of the sections, than before.”<sup>127</sup> Williams observes that Lincoln’s Address highlighted the responsibilities of North and South, as well as his own new executive obligations.<sup>128</sup> He observed that Lincoln used the Address in appeal “to the basic humanity of the nations citizenry”,<sup>129</sup> employing direct quotation from the conclusion of the Address.

The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield, 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.<sup>130</sup>

### **5.5.2. Lincoln’s use of the Bible in the Address**

This Address is a profoundly political speech, although there are moments when there is evidence of Lincoln’s use of the Bible’s. Rable’s assessment is that Lincoln

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Joseph R. Fornierie, *Magazine of History*, 23, no. 1. (2009): 11-16.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 269.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Frank J. Williams, *Judging Lincoln* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002. Reprint, 2007), 6.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 271.

“Weighed in at least briefly about the relationship between divine will and the sectional crisis.”<sup>131</sup>

#### 5.5.2.1. If God, “be on our side”

The first potential incident of Lincoln’s engagement with the Bible occurred thus:

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 our side, or on yours, that truth and that justice will surely prevail, by the judgement of this great tribunal, the American people.<sup>132</sup>

The second possibility is:

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.<sup>133</sup>

Lincoln did not offer biblical quotations here, but his words are suggestive of his previous material on the essentiality of divine assistance. He expressed the thought that appeared to have sustained and challenged him in the delivery of his Farewell Address. Previous treatment of the link between Jesus’ statements on the matter and Lincoln’s can be applied to this section of the Address.

In his previous comments Lincoln had stated on multiple occasions that, without God’s help, he could do nothing. Now in this Address he expressed the ultimate conclusion of his conviction: that if God is on the side of the South, and therefore against the preservation of the union, then the American people will see and judge this for themselves. It is a thought expressed with boldness and humility: humility in the light of the unassailable will of the creator, and the boldness to declare it publically.

The vast majority of Lincoln’s text is comprised of arguments derived from a constitutional and legal position; however, it can be argued that without his material built around echoes of the Bible’s teaching on the essentiality of divine assistance, his ultimate vindication of the Union cause would have been possibly weakened. Lincoln set the scene for potential civil war and subsequent Union triumph as ultimately a matter of the will of God. If the South were to win it would be the will of God,

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<sup>131</sup> George C. Rable, *God’s Almost Chosen People: A Religious History of the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010) Kindle edition, 47.

<sup>132</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 270.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

because he declared the outcome of the crisis would determine such: “If the Almighty Ruler of nations ... be on our side, or on yours, that truth and that justice will surely prevail.”<sup>134</sup> The reaffirmation of Lincoln’s Springfield biblical echoes in the Address is actually rather profound, and provides a spiritual dimension of destiny to an intensely political landscape.

### 5.5.2.2. The sacred oath

This section will examine part of Lincoln’s text that indicates something of his approach to the commencement of his Presidency. The importance of the context of Lincoln’s words requires extended quotation.

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 first being yourself 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.<sup>135</sup>

The Presidential Oath of Office clearly meant more to Lincoln than mere legal and constitutional formality. In the light of the possibility of alternative wording for the oaths, for example, to swear on the lives of people or cherished objects, Lincoln considered that an oath registered in Heaven demanded pre-eminence. The actual wording of the Oath of Office<sup>136</sup> contains no mention of God or Heaven.

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.<sup>137</sup>

Lincoln placed his hand on the Clerk's open Bible,<sup>138</sup> recited the Oath, and as Burlingame claims, he “kissed the Bible” when the oath was complete.<sup>139</sup> According to Hay and Nicolay, Lincoln had selected the option ‘I swear’<sup>140</sup> rather than ‘affirm’, so in the literal sense, he had indeed sworn an oath. Briggs describes Lincoln as

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<sup>134</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 270.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

<sup>136</sup> The prescribed text of the U.S. Presidential Oath of Office is found in The United States Constitution, Article 2, Section 1, Clause 8.

[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html) U.S. Constitution, "Article 2, Section 1, Clause 8, U.S. Presidential Oath of Office." accessed 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011.

<sup>137</sup> [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html) U.S. Constitution, "Article 2, Section 1, Clause 8, U.S. Presidential Oath of Office." accessed 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011.

<sup>138</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 3. 344.

<sup>139</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 2. Location 23452.

<sup>140</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 3. 344.

invoking “the quasi-religious sanction of his presidential vow to preserve the Constitution – as he saw his duty – to block secession.”<sup>141</sup> Briggs correctly asserts that in describing the oath as registered in heaven, he is not claiming “the sanction of heaven for himself.”<sup>142</sup> Lincoln asserted that the oath so registered could not be diluted; Briggs describes Lincoln’s elevated estimation of the oath as a “religio-political invocation of presidential authority.”<sup>143</sup>

It is interesting to note Briggs’ choice of language. The nature of Lincoln’s use of the Bible is not a religious exercise. He employed the sanction of the Bible to endorse what he considered to be just political positions. Lincoln was not apparently content to speak of an oath registered before the American People, which he believed to be enormously significant, having already described the populous as “this great tribunal.”<sup>144</sup> For Lincoln the oath was more than political, more than a matter of human accountability; this was an oath registered “in heaven.”<sup>145</sup> In many ways it is true to say that Lincoln’s objectives for the Address were bound together by his expressed view of the gravity of the oath of office. Paludan correctly stated that Lincoln used the address to explain “what was at stake, what he would tolerate, what he was willing to do to preserve the government and the union.”<sup>146</sup> Lincoln would do whatever was necessary to preserve the Union, not because of any personal agenda or ruthlessness of character, but because he now considered himself bound by the most sacred of all oaths: that which was ‘registered in heaven.’

Lincoln made reference to his Presidential Oath three times during the Address. In the first full sentence of his text he refers to it in rather legalistic language;<sup>147</sup> he mentions it again by way of affirming his own commitment to the Constitution.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Briggs, *Lincoln’s Speeches*, 298.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 299.

<sup>144</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 270.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>146</sup> Phillip S. Paludan, *The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln* (Lawrence: University of Kansas 1994), 53.

<sup>147</sup> “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.’” Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 263.

<sup>148</sup> “I take the official oath to-day, with no mental reservations, with no purpose to construe the Constitution or laws, by any hypercritical means.” Ibid., Vol. 4. 265.

### 5.5.2.2.1. Other Presidents and the oath registered in Heaven

In terms of precedence, the first fifteen Presidents<sup>149</sup> furnished a legacy of eighteen public Inaugural Ceremonies.<sup>150</sup> The only incumbent to connect the oath of office with heaven was the sixth President John Quincy Adams, on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 1825. In his only Inaugural Address, Adams begins with this phrase.

...I appear, my fellow-citizens, in your presence and in that of Heaven to bind myself by the solemnities of religious obligation to the faithful performance of the duties to which I have been called.<sup>151</sup>

Adams had a strong Christian faith,<sup>152</sup> and employed the concept of the superlative nature of heavenly authority.<sup>153</sup> It is not therefore surprising that he would consider that a public oath of such importance would carry a degree of accountability to the God of Heaven. Lincoln believed that his oath was primarily registered in heaven; Adams also reasoned that his oath was sacred enough to make his duty to his office comparable with a religious devotion.

George Washington never expressed such thoughts in either of his Inaugural Addresses. Indeed, the consideration of his obligation was entirely limited to the constitution and the electorate.<sup>154</sup> Jackson spoke of the Oath as being *solemn*<sup>155</sup>, while William Henry Harrison and Zachary Taylor simply spoke of the Oath as having been

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<sup>149</sup> Alan Brinkley, and Davis Dyer, eds. *The American Presidency* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004).

<sup>150</sup> The disparity between the number of Presidents (fifteen) and the number of Inaugural Addresses (eighteen) is due to the fact that Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, and Jackson, served two terms of office. Presidents John Tyler and Millard Fillmore, did not deliver Inaugural Addresses because they both ascended to the Presidency, having served as Vice Presidents, when their incumbent Presidents died in office. Robert M. Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 249. Zachary Taylor died on the 9<sup>th</sup> July 1850 after only sixteen months in office. He was succeeded by Millard Fillmore; K. Jack Bauer, *Zachary Taylor: Soldier, Planter, Statesman of the Old Southwest* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985. Reprint, 1993), 256 and 316.

<sup>151</sup> *Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies. Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States.* (New York: Cosimo Books Inc., 1989. Reprint, 2008), 53.

<sup>152</sup> Paul C. Nagel, *John Quincy Adams: A Public Life, a Private Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1997), 230-231.

<sup>153</sup> Some examples of Adams' use of the consummate authority of heaven are as follows. Speaking of the privilege of being born in America he said "...enjoying in peace and security whatever heaven sent them, having none to make them afraid." "I can never ask of heaven success, even for my country, in a cause where she should be in the wrong." "...the perfidy and tyranny of which the Indians are to be made the victims, and leave the punishment of it to Heaven." Lynn Hudson Parson, *John Quincy Adams: American Profiles* (Madison: Madison House Publishers Inc., 1998. Reprint, Lanham: Roman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2001), 106, 134 and 206.

<sup>154</sup> "I may (besides incurring constitutional punishment) be subject to the upbraiding of all who are now witnesses of the present solemn ceremony." *Inaugural Ceremonies*, 6.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.



prescribed by the Constitution.<sup>156</sup> The other Presidents did not actually utter the word *oath* in their addresses, although Adams, Madison, Monroe and Van Buren offered allusion to it.<sup>157</sup> Lincoln's predecessor had more to say on the matter of the Oath of Office. On Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 1857, James Buchanan both commenced and concluded his only Inaugural Address with reference to the Oath: "I appear before you this day to take the solemn oath "that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States."<sup>158</sup> He completed his Address with a sentence that commenced "I shall now proceed to take the oath of office prescribed by the Constitution."<sup>159</sup> Buchanan clearly placed great value on the importance of the oath, even going to the length of almost reciting it before he was required to at the direction of the Chief Justice, but his language is still legalistic. He invoked divine assistance for his work,<sup>160</sup> but did not vocalise a connection between divine authority and the Oath.

Those who referred to the Oath of Office mostly spoke of it in terms of its constitutional importance, while some considered it to be solemn; all except John Quincy Adams referred to it in purely political language. When Lincoln spoke of the Presidential Oath as being "registered in heaven", he was certainly not following a strong political tradition. He considered the Oath registered in heaven, which is an entirely biblical concept that what is said on earth is taken seriously in heaven.

#### **5.5.2.2.2. No traditional connection to Heaven**

It is not particularly surprising that all but one of the previous Presidents referred to the Oath in earthly and political terms. The actual wording and nature of recitation is almost entirely non-religious. The wording of the oath is entirely secular, and a

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<sup>156</sup> Harrison said "I appear before you to, fellow-citizens, to take the oaths which the constitution prescribes" Taylor said "I appear here to take the oath prescribed by the constitution" Ibid., 95 and 111.

<sup>157</sup> John Adams (4<sup>th</sup> March 1797) offered this as part of his Address conclusion "my mind is prepared without hesitation to lay myself under the most solemn obligations to support it (the Constitution) to my utmost power." James Madison (4<sup>th</sup> March 1809) acknowledged that he was "about to pledge myself by the most solemn of sanctions." James Munroe's Second Inaugural Address (5<sup>th</sup> March 1821) concluded with a paragraph that began "Entering with these views the office which I have just solemnly sworn to execute with fidelity and to the utmost of my ability" Martin Van Buren (4<sup>th</sup> March 1837) commenced his Address by saying "The practice of all my predecessors imposes on me an obligation ... to accompany the first and solemn act of my public trust" Ibid., 12, 25, 51 and 69.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>160</sup> "In entering upon this great office I must humbly invoke the God of our fathers for wisdom and firmness to execute its high and responsible duties" His concluding phrase was "whilst humbly invoking the blessing of Divine Providence on this great people." Ibid., 125-126 and 132.

secular representative of the law administered the oath. However, the hand of the President-Elect was placed on the King James Bible, and for Lincoln this symbolism was not incidental formality. It has been noted that Burlingame claimed that Lincoln kissed the Bible upon completion of the Oath, so for him this was more than a legal and civil oath.

In this thesis it has been established that Lincoln had an extensive and detailed knowledge of the Bible. The New Testament warns strongly of the perils of swearing an oath. Jesus warned in Matthew 5:34, “But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne;” indeed, the advice of James 5:12 is “above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.” It is not possible to say with any certainty that Lincoln was influenced by these Bible verses, although it is a reasonable suggestion to assert that Lincoln would have possessed knowledge of them. He was brought up in a strict Calvinistic Baptist family and had witnessed expressions of fear and reverence for God at influential quarters.<sup>161</sup> It is not unreasonable to suggest that Lincoln’s cultural background of reverence for Divine Authority, as well as his knowledge of the quoted Bible verses, would have influenced his thinking as he took the Oath of Office. He believed that the Presidential Oath was not only heard by the electorate, but by the God of Heaven, who had registered Lincoln’s promise to defend the Constitution. Lincoln’s language suggested that he was rather more concerned about Divine approval than he was political expediency. Even if the result were civil war, Lincoln would not break the Oath to preserve the Constitution, which he believed to be registered in heaven.

In speaking of the sacred nature of his oath, Lincoln did not quote the Bible; nonetheless, the influence of the Bible is not unimaginable. The Bible’s teaching mentioned in Matthew and James could have provided something of a catalyst in the formation of Lincoln’s thinking regarding his oath. There was virtually no other reason to associate the Oath with heaven. Only one of the eighteen previous Presidential Inaugural Addresses had considered possible eternal implications; Lincoln therefore did not follow any required precedent. He had no reason to feel any pressure of convention to make such a comment about the Oath, other than his apparent belief that God registers in Heaven promises that are made on the Earth. The

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<sup>161</sup> Lincoln’s Christian upbringing has been examined in Section 2.3 of this thesis.

only other explanation is that Lincoln was pandering to religious sensibilities, but this is extremely unlikely when considering the fact that seventeen of the eighteen previous addresses had not considered this necessary. The most important moment in Lincoln's political career was his Inauguration as President, and at that moment he announced that he considered himself to have undertaken an "oath registered in heaven."

The seriousness with which Lincoln considered his Oath brought mixed reaction. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* expressed the fear that "the country may understand, first as last, that the inauguration of Mr Lincoln to-day is the inauguration of civil war, and the death-knell of the Union."<sup>162</sup> However, the Address was considered a patriotic one by the *Chicago Tribune*, "embodying sounder wisdom and higher patriotism... stamped with firmer purpose to maintain the Union and Constitution inviolate."<sup>163</sup> Lincoln's determination to do whatever was necessary to preserve the Union was fuelled by his understanding of the nature of the Oath, and this understanding was in considerable measure inspired by the message of the Bible.

### **5.5.3. A brief comparison with the Confederate President**

During the Presidential years a unique opportunity existed for comparison. From 1861 until 1865, the Southern Confederacy had its own President,<sup>164</sup> which marks the only period when there were two American Presidents governing concurrently. It is therefore of value to draw relevant comparisons between the Inaugural Addresses of Davis and Lincoln.

Lincoln, it would appear, was not alone in his belief that the cause to which he dedicated himself would be lost without Divine intervention. Seven days after Lincoln's Address, the Confederacy announced its national motto would be *Doe Vindice*, which translates as "With God as our defender."<sup>165</sup> When Jefferson Davis delivered his valedictorian to the United States Senate, he presented a warning to the Union regarding the consequences of Northern interference in the Confederacy. He predicted

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<sup>162</sup> *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. 4<sup>th</sup> March 1861, 2.

<sup>163</sup> *Chicago Tribune*. 5<sup>th</sup> March 1861, 1.

<sup>164</sup> William E. Dodd, *Jefferson Davis* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs and Company, 1907).

<sup>165</sup> Harry S. Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War* (New York: Penguin Group, 2007), 47; Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 270.

Disaster on every portion of the country; and if you will have it thus, we will invoke the God of our fathers, who delivered them from the power of the lion, to protect us from the ravage of the bear; and thus, putting our trust in God and in our own firm hearts and strong arms, we will vindicate the right as best we may.<sup>166</sup>

Davis employed a biblical allusion that could be evocative of the David narrative. Davis' language comparing potential Federal intrusion with the Lion and the Bear. In the King James Bible the lion is mentioned 104 times in 83 verses.<sup>167</sup> The book of Revelation furnishes examples of the lion as both heroic and a dangerous nuisance.<sup>168</sup> Most relevant to Davis was the symbolism of the lion as the most dangerous adversary,<sup>169</sup> and possibly even a satanic menace.<sup>170</sup> The bear is a far less symbolic biblical character. The bear is mentioned many times in the Bible, but is always referred to as the large dangerous animal it is universally known to be.<sup>171</sup> Davis employed the phrases "power of the lion"<sup>172</sup> and "ravage of the bear."<sup>173</sup> These exact phrases do not appear in the Bible. The lion and the bear are mentioned as dangerous enemies together in the Old Testament<sup>174</sup>, the most famous being the testimony of the young David, who told King Saul in 1 Samuel 17:36, "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear" in defence of his father's flocks. It is conceivable that this verse was in Davis' mind, the context being the battle between David and Goliath, good and evil. There are traces of Davis' understanding of his and the Confederacy's dependence on divine assistance. Davis' hostile tone is punctuated with language that was possibly informed by the Bible. Davis' use of the phrase "we will invoke"<sup>175</sup> suggests that he

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<sup>166</sup> W.J. Cooper, ed. *Jefferson Davis: The Essential Writings* (New York: Modern Library/Random House Inc., 2003), 194.

<sup>167</sup> Statistics calculated from, Strong, *Strong's Concordance*.

<sup>168</sup> Christ is compared to the lion, "And one of the elders saith unto me, weep not: behold the *Lion* of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." Revelation 5:5. The Anti-Christ is described as 'the beast' and compared to the lion, "And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the *lion*: and the dragon gave him his power; and his seat, and great authority." Revelation 13:2.

<sup>169</sup> "A *lion* which is strongest among beast, and turneth not away from any;" Proverbs 30:30.

<sup>170</sup> "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring *lion*, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8.

<sup>171</sup> "For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, and they be as a bear robbed of her whelps." 2 Samuel 17:8; "Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly." Proverbs 17:12.

<sup>172</sup> Cooper, *Essential Writings*, 194.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>174</sup> Proverbs 28:15 and Lamentations 3:10 speak of the danger of the lion and the danger of the bear, in the same verse.

<sup>175</sup> Cooper, *Essential Writings*, 194.

believed the initiative for Divine intervention rested with the Confederate executive, while Lincoln's language placed sovereignty at the throne of Heaven. Davis' language does not reveal a man inspired by the Bible; rather a leader who employed its language to punctuate his own threats.

It was Monday 18<sup>th</sup> February 1861,<sup>176</sup> at the Alabama State House, the temporary Capital of the Confederacy, that Jefferson Davis delivered his Inaugural Address.<sup>177</sup> He then took the Oath of Office as the first and only President of the Confederate States of America.<sup>178</sup> Davis' address was a successful endeavour, and succinct by his standards.<sup>179</sup> The speech contains no trace of possible biblical influence, although there are three occasions in which Divine assistance is mentioned.<sup>180</sup>

The emphasis is on the supposed righteousness of the cause, the strength and determination of the South; these two factors are expected to be summarily blessed by Divine assistance. The idea of a people being encouraged to believe that they are in right and that God is on their side is hardly a unique thought. Davis clearly believed in the need for divine assistance, but his language in this speech and preceding addresses is not as emphatic as Lincoln's. It has been explained that on a number of occasions Lincoln cited the words of Jesus; without Divine help the Union would achieve nothing.

It is also interesting to note the choice of language and historians' reactions to it. Despite so much evidence to the contrary, some modern scholars labelled Lincoln as a Deist when he spoke of God in anything other than a proper noun.<sup>181</sup> It is curious that modern historians have chosen to make such a judgement of Lincoln's language, when Davis' could have equally been considered as such. Davis, in his three allusions to Divine aid, spoke of 'Providence' twice<sup>182</sup>, and once referred to "the God of our fathers."<sup>183</sup> It is curious that the same suspicious rigour afforded to the study of Lincoln's faith has not been extended to Davis'. The works on Davis, which are here cited, do not mention deism in any sense in connection with the man himself. If

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<sup>176</sup> Dodd, *Jefferson Davis*, 223.

<sup>177</sup> William C. Davis, *Jefferson Davis: The Man and His Hour* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991. Reprint, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 307.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> Cooper, *Jefferson Davis*, 198, 200 and 203.

<sup>181</sup> Lincoln and deism was briefly discussed in Section 5.2 of this thesis.

<sup>182</sup> Cooper, *Jefferson Davis*, 198 and 200.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 202-203.

judged by the standards examined in Section 5.2.2 of this thesis, then Davis could also have been labelled as a Deist. The truth is that Davis is remembered as a Southern Christian Gentleman, who was actually attending a service in St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Richmond, when he received the news of Lee's retreat with the warning to evacuate the government from Richmond.<sup>184</sup>

It is doubtful that either portion of the sectional crisis influenced each other on this matter, but Lincoln did choose to declare that he not only believed that not only was he personally reliant on God's help, but so also was the Republic. Davis was dealing with a similarly Christian electorate, and yet it was Lincoln who spoke more equivocally of his personal and national need for divine assistance. His declared reliance on divine assistance is not a nebulous platitude; it is both linguistically and philosophically biblical. Lincoln held these views because he learned them from his reading of the Bible.

#### **5.5.4. Conclusion to Lincoln's First Inaugural Address**

In this Address it is important to remember that Lincoln's task was to construct an uncompromising case for The Union, whilst attempting to placate the grievances of the Southern States. His challenge was to be unambiguous, without further alienation. The argument being developed in this thesis includes the fact that Lincoln was not a preacher, and in his political career he did not consider his mission to expressly promote the Bible's teaching as an objective in itself. In this Address Lincoln developed arguments based on Constitutional legal premises. However Lincoln stated his conviction that without divine assistance no human efforts could succeed; this thesis submits that he expressed this contention by employing echoes to the text of the Bible. He also declared his motivation for a determined and forceful preservation of the Federal Government, namely that he would have an "Oath registered in Heaven."<sup>185</sup>

#### **5.6. The Lincoln Presidency during the years 1861-1863**

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the place of the Bible in the political writings and speeches of Abraham Lincoln. However, in order to understand these sufficiently,

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<sup>184</sup> Lee's note was received by Davis on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1865. James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 845-846.

<sup>185</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 261.

some brief narrative of both the Presidency and the War is required. McPherson noted that Lincoln “was the only president in American history whose entire administration was bounded by war.”<sup>186</sup> Lincoln’s importance as an historical figure could feasibly be justified purely on the basis of being incumbent during the War. Churchill considered that the War occupied a unique place in military history: “the great American Civil War, which must on the whole be considered the noblest and least avoidable of all the great mass-conflicts.”<sup>187</sup>

It is difficult to exaggerate the historical significance of the War, particularly in American memory. The War was important in terms of the military campaigns, but also the political and social ramifications were equally dramatic in their transforming effect upon the nation. 100 years after the War’s commencement, Catton’s assessment was thus: “in 1861 the North and the South went to war, destroying one America and beginning the building of another which is not even yet complete.”<sup>188</sup>

Lincoln’s Presidency was therefore synonymous with the War. Lincoln’s policies and decision-making were affected in a profound way by the progress of the War: “It was a changing and evolving situation, especially under the pressure cooker of the Civil War, where things changed rapidly, and they changed radically. Lincoln changed with them.”<sup>189</sup> In terms of the eventual Northern victory “The Union strategies were also the fruit of superior leadership, in which Abraham Lincoln was the towering figure.”<sup>190</sup>

The War is such an important and fascinating subject, and yet it is only of relevance to this thesis as the background for Lincoln’s political speeches and writing. Such was the scale of the War that almost everything Lincoln wrote and delivered was directly affected by the extent and effect of the conflict. To understand Lincoln’s use of the Bible in his writing and delivery requires some contextual detail of the War.

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<sup>186</sup> James M. McPherson, *Tried by War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008) Kindle edition, Location 87.

<sup>187</sup> Winston S. Churchill ed. *Winston Churchill: The Great Republic. A History of America* (London: Cassell and Co., 2002), 218.

<sup>188</sup> Catton, *The Civil War*, 7.

<sup>189</sup> James M. McPherson, in Fehrenbacher, *Lincoln in Context*, 294.

<sup>190</sup> Charles P. Roland, *An American Iliad: The Story of the Civil War, Second Edition* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2004), 250.

### 5.6.1. The Lincoln Presidency in 1861

The secession crisis resulted in the formation of the Confederate States of America. In his Inaugural Address Lincoln promised that he would not instigate a Civil War.<sup>191</sup> Indeed, Lincoln's expressed desire was that "We must not be enemies"<sup>192</sup>, and his hopeful expectation was that their shared heritage would prevail between North and South.<sup>193</sup> However, on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1861 Confederate batteries opened fire on the Union Fort Sumter in South Carolina's Charleston Harbour.<sup>194</sup> The grim prognosis of Lincoln's Inaugural Address had come to pass: the South had become the aggressors, and the War had begun. Lincoln would not declare war because the States in Rebellion were not foreign powers, so he issued a proclamation<sup>195</sup> calling for militia to suppress the uprising. The first major engagement of the War became known in the North as the Battle of Bull Run and took place on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> July; it was a crushing defeat for the North.<sup>196</sup> There were a number of small engagements, and a number of naval successes for the Union. During 1861 Lincoln proclaimed a blockade<sup>197</sup>, and later the same month suspended the writ of Habeas Corpus<sup>198</sup> along the Philadelphia-Washington Military line. On the 1<sup>st</sup> November Lincoln appointed George B. McClellan as General-in-Chief of the Union Army.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> In your hands my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you. You can have no conflict, without being yourselves the aggressors." Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 271.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Samuel W. Crawford, *The Genesis of the Civil War: The Story of Sumter 1860-61* (New York: Jenkins and McGowen, 1887), 423-427.

<sup>195</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 331-332.

<sup>196</sup> Everette B. Long, *The Civil War Day by Day: An Almanac 1861-1865* (Garden City: Doubleday Publishing Group, 1971. Reprint, Cambridge: Da Capo Press Inc., 1985), 98-100; William C. Davis, *Battle at Bull Run: A History of the First Major Campaign of the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977. Reprint, 1981), 243.

<sup>197</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 338-339; James F. Rhodes, *History of the Civil War 1861-1865* (New York: Macmillan and Company Ltd, 1919. Reprint, New York: Cosimo Inc., 2009), 20.

<sup>198</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 344 and 347; D.L. Martin, "When Lincoln Suspended Habeas Corpus," *American Bar Association Journal*, no. 60 (1974): 99.

<sup>199</sup> George Brinton McClellan (1826-1885). During the War he served two periods as Union General-in-Chief. McClellan was personally disloyal to Lincoln in private remarks, and eventually ran against him as the Democratic candidate for the Presidency in the 1864 election. Peter Cozzens, ed. *Battles and leaders of the Civil War*. Vol. 5. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002); Ethan S. Rafuse, *McClellan's War: The Failure of Moderation in the Struggle for the Union* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Thomas J. Rowland, *George B. McClellan and Civil War History: In the Shadow of Grant and Sherman* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1998).



### 5.6.2. The Lincoln Presidency in 1862

The second year of Lincoln's Presidency would witness a dramatic escalation of the War, which began to present the very real possibility of Southern Victory. There were a number of significant military engagements. In the Western Theatre of operations the Union cause prospered at the Battles of Fort Henry,<sup>200</sup> Fort Donelson,<sup>201</sup> Shiloh<sup>202</sup> and New Orleans.<sup>203</sup> The Eastern campaign that began so dreadfully continued to disappoint. The major engagements were the battles of Seven Pines,<sup>204</sup> the Seven Days,<sup>205</sup> Second Bull Run,<sup>206</sup> Antietam<sup>207</sup> and Fredericksburg.<sup>208</sup> Despite success in the Western engagements, the Confederate Capital of Richmond remained largely unassailed, and the Eastern Theatre had been disastrous for the Union cause, and for Lincoln in particular. The year's final major engagement at Fredericksburg received the following coverage from the *New York Times*: "The nation will stand aghast at the terrible price which has been paid for its life when the realities of the battle-field of Fredericksburg are spread before it."<sup>209</sup> Indeed, one of most significant aspects of all these military engagements was that in all occasions, the casualties numbered in the tens of thousands. This affected Lincoln deeply, and as will be examined, scholars believe that his religious faith deepened in the context of these horrendous hardships.

In 1862 Lincoln experienced the personal tragedy of the loss of his son

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<sup>200</sup> Thomas L. Connelly, *Civil War Tennessee: Battles and Leaders* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1979); Benjamin F. Cooling, *Forts Henry and Donelson: The Key to the Confederate Heartland* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987).

<sup>201</sup> William Farina, *Ulysses S. Grant 1861-1864: His Rise From Obscurity to Military Greatness* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company Inc., 2007), 90; Cooling, *Forts Henry and Donelson*.

<sup>202</sup> L. Lewis, "Rivers of Blood." *The American Mercury*, May 1931, 73; McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 413.

<sup>203</sup> Chester G. Hearn, *The Capture of New Orleans 1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995); McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*.

<sup>204</sup> Walter B. Wood, and James E. Edmonds, *The Civil War in the United States 1861-1865*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Methuen and Company, 1908), 63; McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*.

<sup>205</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 468; Brian K. Burton, *Extraordinary Circumstances: The Seven days Battles* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Kevin Dougherty and Michael J. Moore, *The Peninsula Campaign of 1862: A Military Analysis*. (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2005).

<sup>206</sup> Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, *How the North Won*, 229; John J. Hennessey, *Return to Bull Run: The Campaign and Battle of Second Manassas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993. Reprint, 1999).

<sup>207</sup> Stephen W. Sears, *Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983. Reprint, New York: Mariner Books, 2003), 317; Gary W. Gallagher, ed. *The Antietam Campaign* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

<sup>208</sup> George C. Rable, in Gary W. Gallagher, ed. *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Decision on the Rappahannock* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 48; Francis A. O'Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Winter on the Rappahannock* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2003. Reprint, 2006).

<sup>209</sup> *New York Times*. 17<sup>th</sup> December, 1862.

Willie.<sup>210</sup> Two positive achievements of the year addressed in some measure the issue of chattel slavery. In April Congress heard Lincoln announce the end of slavery in the District of Columbia<sup>211</sup>, and on 22<sup>nd</sup> September he issued the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.<sup>212</sup> On 4<sup>th</sup> August Lincoln announced a draft of 300,000 men for military service.<sup>213</sup> In September, Lincoln extended the suspension of the writ of Habeas Corpus to the entire Union.<sup>214</sup>

Despite positive political achievements, the War was delivering horrendous casualties and union defeats. Wright reflected thus: “The immediate presence was the awful question whether there was any United States or not! While the whole fabric was tottering under the earthquake of rebellion.”<sup>215</sup>

### 5.6.3. The Lincoln Presidency in 1863

In order to engender some possibility of military progress, Lincoln appointed Major General Joseph Hooker as his new commander in the Eastern Theatre. Hooker’s first engagement was the disaster that became known as the Battle of Chancellorsville and resulted in over 30,000 casualties.<sup>216</sup>

In 1863 the direction of the War was altered in the Union’s favour by the victory at Gettysburg.<sup>217</sup> The day after the Union triumph at Gettysburg, important news came from the West that Union General Grant had prevailed at Vicksburg.<sup>218</sup> The autumn of this pivotal year provided mixed fortunes for the Union cause. The September engagement at Chickamauga<sup>219</sup> bought to prominence the unyielding

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<sup>210</sup> Willie died on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1862. William Marvel, *Lincoln’s Darkest Year: The War in 1862* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008), 14.

<sup>211</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 192.

<sup>212</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 434; Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 234.

<sup>213</sup> Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln*, 299.

<sup>214</sup> Lincoln issued a Proclamation suspending the Writ of Habeas Corpus, on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 1862. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 436-437.

<sup>215</sup> D.T. Wright, “The Campaign of 1862.” *The North American Review* 131, no. 287 (1880): 356.

<sup>216</sup> Edward G. Longacre, *The Commanders of Chancellorsville: The Gentleman vs. the Rouge* (Nashville: Rutledge Hill Press, 2005), 60; Stephen W. Sears, *Chancellorsville* (New York: Mariner Books, 1996).

<sup>217</sup> Stephen W. Sears, *Gettysburg* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003); Jim Weeks, *Gettysburg: Memory, Market and an American Shrine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Hugh Bicheno, *Gettysburg* (London: Cassell and Co., 2001).

<sup>218</sup> Michael B. Ballard, *Vicksburg: The Campaign that Opened the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

<sup>219</sup> Peter Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1992. Reprint, 1996); Freeman Cleaves, *The Rock of Chickamauga: The Life of George H. Thomas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1948), 178; Steven E. Woodworth, ed. *The Chickamauga Campaign* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010).

combat abilities of General Thomas, but eventually proved to be a Rebel victory, gained at an atrocious human cost. The final major action of 1863 was the November Battle of Chattanooga.<sup>220</sup> The successful reinforcement of the Union held the city, and the securement of a number of locally strategic positions was extremely important to the eventual Union gains of the following year.

A particular reason for the inclusion of this brief narrative on the War is that Lincoln was not indifferent to events unfolding under his leadership. His speeches and writings must be considered in the light of his personal feelings in this regard. Lincoln was deeply affected by the human cost of the War. When speaking to the father of a Gettysburg casualty, he confessed

When I think of the sacrifices of life yet to be offered and the hearts and homes yet to be made desolate before this dreadful war ... is over, my heart is like lead within me, and I feel, at times, like hiding in deep darkness.<sup>221</sup>

The nation was deeply affected by the victory and the cost of Gettysburg, and in November the Battlefield was dedicated as a Cemetery, at which Lincoln would deliver a short address that would pass into American political folklore.<sup>222</sup>

Lincoln's attentions were not allowed to exclusively concentrate on the events of the battlefields of 1863. An example of the distractions that occupied the President's mind was the Draft Riots in New York<sup>223</sup>, which are considered to be the largest and most violent riots in American history.<sup>224</sup>

A feature of Lincoln's prosecution of the War is that his commitment to democracy drove him to insist that the normal process of regular popular elections should continue. This determination to persist in the democratic process, although

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<sup>220</sup> Peter Cozzens, *The Shipwreck of Their Hopes: The Battles for Chattanooga* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Matt Spruill, *Storming the Heights: A Guide to the Battle of Chattanooga* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003).

<sup>221</sup> Allen Thorndike Rice, A.T. *Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln by Distinguished Men of His Time* (Philadelphia: North American Publishing Co., 1888), 511.

<sup>222</sup> Examination of the impact of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address will be offered in Section 6.2 of this thesis.

<sup>223</sup> The New York Draft Riots (13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> July 1863). Iver Bernstein, *The New York Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1990); Steven L. Danver, ed. *Revolts, Protests, Demonstrations and Rebellions in American History*. Vol. 1. (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO LLC, 2011); Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City 1626-1863* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 280-281; W. Aikman, *A Sermon: Preached on the Sabbath Succeeding the Secession Riots in New York City, July 19, 1863* (Wilmington: Henry Eckel Printers, 1863), 9.

<sup>224</sup> Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 92; Danver, *Revolts, Protests*, 435.

commendable, did mean that, in addition to the troubles of the War, Lincoln had the fickleness of public opinion to trouble his mind.<sup>225</sup>

An important political development concluded the year. Lincoln issued his Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction<sup>226</sup>, which offered generous terms to make the Confederate States' reintegration into the Union as accessible as possible.<sup>227</sup> This central year of the War would prove to be a testing season for the sixteenth President. Lincoln would receive news of crushing defeats and strategic victories, usually in the contexts of enormous casualties. He used the Bible to help him wrestle with domestic issues of normal governmental business, and made one of the most important speeches in American History.

### **5.7. Presidential use of the Bible during the first three years**

The military and political features that have been mentioned during 1861 to 1863 provide the context of all Lincoln's writings and speeches during this period. There were some indications of possible engagement with the scripture, but the vast majority of the Bible's potential influence upon Lincoln can be grouped together into a direction, which arrested Lincoln's reasoning in increasing measures, during this period. Finally, consideration will be given to two speeches that have been universally accepted to be of importance to the Lincoln legacy.

#### **5.7.1. The infrequency of Presidential speeches**

An important feature in understanding the American Presidency during the Antebellum is the surprising lack of speeches delivered by a President. The Presidential role was far more that of a Chief Executive who appeared to devote himself to the business of executive government. Those few speeches that were delivered tended to be composed of technical political content. During his entire Presidency, Lincoln made relatively few addresses to the public; bearing in mind the effect of the War on the wider population, this is initially rather surprising. In fact the President's schedule rarely took him out of Washington, and when the occasion arose the journeys were not of great distance.

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<sup>225</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 2*. Location 37704.

<sup>226</sup> Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 7*. 53-56.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-56; Herman Belz, "Review of 'Abraham Lincoln and Reconstruction, by McCrary,'" *The Journal of American History* 66, no. 3 (1979): 662.

The most obvious comparison can be drawn between Lincoln and the current incumbent, Barack Obama. In his first 100 days in office President Obama made 29 major speeches.<sup>228</sup> In contrast to Obama, Lincoln only made one major speech in his first 100 days of office, namely his Inaugural Address.<sup>229</sup> Indeed, in the years 1861 to 1863 Lincoln presented six<sup>230</sup> speeches<sup>231</sup> that may be considered major addresses. It will be noted at the appropriate juncture that the custom of the day required the President to compose his Annual Address to Congress, which would be subsequently delivered by a member of the House. The meagre amount of Lincoln's Presidential addresses was also due in part to his awareness of the delicate public profile of the Presidency. Lincoln explained this thinking to a Maryland audience, who called for a speech: "In my present position it is hardly proper for me to make speeches. Every word is so closely noted that it will not do to make a matured one just now."<sup>232</sup> Following renewed calls Lincoln reiterated, "I can only say, as I did five minutes ago, it is not proper for me to make speeches in my present position."<sup>233</sup>

It has already been stated that Lincoln was laborious and measured in preparation for public address. This disciplined practice clearly accompanied Lincoln into the Presidency, possibly to an even greater extent. The fact that Lincoln made so few speeches between 1861 and 1863 and his sense of cautious responsibility indicates that when there is evidence of his engagement with the Bible, it is significant because of the necessarily selective content.

There is indication of Lincoln's use of the Bible in four of the six major speeches.<sup>234</sup> It is worth noting that the two major speeches which did not contain

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<sup>228</sup> <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/01/26/politics/100days/main4753616/shtml> "Obama's first 100 days," accessed 3rd September 2011.

<sup>229</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 249-404.

<sup>230</sup> It will be noted at the appropriate juncture that the custom of the day required the President to compose his Annual Address to Congress, which would be subsequently delivered by a member of the House.

<sup>231</sup> Lincoln delivered seven major Presidential addresses during 1861-1863. The Inaugural Address (4<sup>th</sup> March 1861); Message to Congress in Special Session (4<sup>th</sup> July 1861); Annual Message to Congress (3<sup>rd</sup> December 1861); Annual Message to Congress (1<sup>st</sup> December 1862); The Gettysburg Address (19<sup>th</sup> November 1863); Annual Message to Congress (8<sup>th</sup> December 1863). Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 262-271; 421-441; *Ibid.*, Vol. 5. 35-53; 518-537; *Ibid.*, Vol. 7. 22-23; 36-42.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 5. 450.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>234</sup> The First Inaugural Address (4<sup>th</sup> March 1861); Annual Message to Congress (1<sup>st</sup> December 1862); The Gettysburg Address (19<sup>th</sup> November 1863); Annual Message to Congress (8<sup>th</sup> December 1863); *Ibid.*, Vol. 4. 262-271; 518-537; *Ibid.*, Vol. 7. 22-23; 36-42.

evidence of strong biblical influence still contained the following wording: “Let us renew our trust in God, and go forward without fear,”<sup>235</sup> and:

We have cause of great gratitude to God for unusual good health, and most abundant harvests ... with a reliance on Providence, all the more firm and earnest, let us proceed in the great task which events have devolved upon us.<sup>236</sup>

Lincoln used the Presidency to govern, and the vast majority of his communication was done through letters, memorandums, telegraphic messages and written proclamations. Lincoln also placed a premium on personal interface. From the administration’s infancy Hay and Nicolay recalled “an impatient multitude clamouring for an audience, and behind these swarmed an army of office seekers.”<sup>237</sup> It is an alien concept to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century American that a citizen who wanted to consult or lobby the President would simply arrive at the Executive Mansion and wait their turn. Lincoln told a staff officer who questioned this unfiltered accessibility “I go into these promiscuous receptions of all who claim to have business with me twice each week... I call these receptions my public-opinion baths.”<sup>238</sup> From 1861 to 1863 most of what Lincoln wrote was brief and related strictly to the issues at hand. There are however a number of occasions when Lincoln used an important moment in the War to reinforce his point by engaging with the Bible. It will be demonstrated that he not only used the scriptures to support his own agenda, but that it is possible to construct a case that Lincoln’s perspective of the War was partly shaped by his understanding of the Bible.

There are a number of examples of Lincoln using the Bible in a general sense, and these will be examined. In this period of the War Lincoln’s thinking crystallised, and his writing reflected the fact that he was arrested by thoughts of the will of God and national repentance. For the purpose of this thesis it will be prudent to furnish a collective evaluation of Lincoln’s use of the Bible in relation the aforementioned topics.

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<sup>235</sup> Message to Congress in Special Session. *Ibid.*, Vol. 4. 441.

<sup>236</sup> Annual Message to Congress. *Ibid.*, Vol. 5. 35 and 53.

<sup>237</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 3. 378.

<sup>238</sup> Lincoln to Charles G. Hapline (1829-1868); Fehrenbacher and Fehrenbacher, *Recollected Words*, 194.

### 5.7.2. Evidence of general use of the Bible

Chapter Two of this thesis lays a foundation in understanding the importance of the Bible in Lincoln's formative years. Lincoln was not just familiar with the Bible; it was one of the only books that this reading-obsessed boy had access to, and he developed an intimacy with the cadence of its language as well as its message. There are examples of this in the writings and remarks that Lincoln constructed during 1861-1863. They are random and are presented by way of evidence of the general influence of the language of the Bible in Lincoln's thinking.

Lincoln mentioned the Pharisees as an example of those who "set ourselves up to be better than other people."<sup>239</sup> In a short message to Congress of 646 words, Lincoln concluded "In view of my great responsibility to my God, and to my country."<sup>240</sup> This thought is also reflected in Lincoln's remarks to the Committee of Reformed Presbyterian Synod.<sup>241</sup> He spoke of repentance and forgiveness in "Christian terms."<sup>242</sup> One of the most significant acts of the Lincoln Presidency was the Emancipation Proclamation, which contains this sentiment: "I invoke the considerate judgement of mankind and the gracious favour of Almighty God."<sup>243</sup>

In a reply to the representation of delegation from Kansas and Missouri,<sup>244</sup> Lincoln addressed the issue of corruption in the agency that was supposed to restrain contraband intelligence and trade. Lincoln appeared to employ a line from the Lord's Prayer to illustrate his point:

Agents to execute it, contrary to the great Prayer, were led into temptation. Some might, while others would not resist that temptation. It was not possible to hold any to a very strict accountability; and those yielding to the temptation, would sell permits and passes to those who would pay most, and most readily for them.<sup>245</sup>

This is reminiscent of the Lord's Prayer's "and lead us not into temptation," which appears with the same wording in both Matthew 6:13 and Luke 11:4. The possibility that Lincoln was employing an allusion to the Gospels is strengthened by the

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<sup>239</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 274.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.* Vol. 5. 146.

<sup>241</sup> "Feeling deeply my responsibility to my country and to that God whom we all owe allegiance, I assure you I will try to do my best, and so may God help me." *Ibid.*, 327.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 343.

<sup>243</sup> The Emancipation Proclamation (1<sup>st</sup> January 1863). *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol.6. 499, Footnote 1.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 501.

application of Gadamer's contention, namely that allusions are presentations of the essence of the text.<sup>246</sup> Lincoln's possible adaptation of the biblical material regarding being lead into temptation, is not inconsistent with the original intention of the text. Gregory's observation has been stated, namely that an explicit reference to a text is evidence of the dependence of an allusion.<sup>247</sup> This is interesting in the light of the fact that Lincoln identified his allusion as belonging to "the great prayer,"<sup>248</sup> which is clearly a novel designation for the Lord's Prayer. Lincoln's context is administrative localised corruption, and yet on such a pragmatic issue he appeared to be drawn to the thought of temptation and the Lord's Prayer to escape its clutches.

In the interests of thorough research it is necessary to mention the following remarks of Lincoln's, in his 1863 Message to Congress.<sup>249</sup> In this address he began by mentioning, "the improved condition of our national affairs, our renewed, and profoundest gratitude to God is due."<sup>250</sup> He then eventually declared

Above all, to that moral training which, under the blessing of Divine Providence, will confer upon them the elevated and sanctifying influences, the hopes and consolation of the Christian faith.<sup>251</sup>

### **5.7.3. Evidence of the Bible in messages of condolence**

The task of discovering and evaluating Lincoln's use of the Bible requires an exhaustive approach. The following section does not reveal new information that will deepen the case at hand; it will however demonstrate that Lincoln used echoes of potentially biblical language in his Presidential messages of consolation. Lincoln wrote a short but rather poignant letter of condolence to the parents of the fallen Colonel E.E. Ellsworth, concluding, "May God give you that consolation which is beyond all earthly power."<sup>252</sup> This demonstrates in a small measure the growing awareness of Lincoln's; that his own executive influence was dwarfed by God's power to affect the larger issues of both Republic and personal circumstance.

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<sup>246</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 144.

<sup>247</sup> Gregory, *Reception of Luke and Acts*, 6.

<sup>248</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6. 501.

<sup>249</sup> Annual Message to Congress, delivered on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1863. Ibid., Vol. 7. 36-53.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>252</sup> Letter to Ephraim and Phoebe Ellsworth, 25<sup>th</sup> May 1861. Ibid., Vol. 4. 386.



Lincoln composed many greetings of congratulation or condolence to foreign Sovereigns. He was President when Britain's Prince Consort Albert passed away.<sup>253</sup> Lincoln wrote to Queen Victoria on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1862, and amongst his expression of commiseration he said "because I know that the Divine hand that has wounded, is the only one that can heal." This statement is powerful because Lincoln spoke from his knowledge of, and belief in, the Bible, but also out of the bitter personal experience of the loss of his mother as a child, and the loss of his sons Eddie in 1850<sup>254</sup> and Willie in 1862.<sup>255</sup>

#### **5.7.4. Greetings to foreign heads of state**

These generally took the form of messages of congratulations or consolation. On 28 occasions Lincoln commended his recipient to God's blessing;<sup>256</sup> the language was similar, and the following are typical examples: "and pray God to have Your Majesty and whole Royal Family constantly under his gracious protection and care;"<sup>257</sup> also "May God have Your Majesty always in His Holy keeping."<sup>258</sup>

#### **5.7.5. Conclusion to general use of the Bible, 1861-1863**

There were comparatively few occasions where Lincoln's use of the Bible would have been necessary or appropriate during these first three Presidential years. Lincoln's correspondence was largely functional, and the workload required the most concise expression. However, there were occasions when a reference or allusion to the Bible would have appeared in order; for example, Lincoln's Order for a Day of Thanksgiving was short and contained no inference to the Bible.<sup>259</sup> Lincoln drafted a letter for those who would serve as Chaplains, but included no biblical material.<sup>260</sup> Lincoln wrote to the Reverend G.H. Stuart to thank him for the work of the Christian

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<sup>253</sup> Stanley Weintraub, *Uncrowned King: The Life of Prince Albert* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

<sup>254</sup> Lincoln family bereavements have already been documented in Section 2.5 of this thesis.

<sup>255</sup> Marvel, *Lincoln's Darkest Year*, 14.

<sup>256</sup> During the Presidential years 1861-1863 Lincoln sent 28 messages to foreign Sovereigns that contained Biblical expression of good will. Seven messages were composed in 1861; Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 417-Vol. 5. 75; In 1862 Lincoln ten such messages. Ibid., Vol. 5. 105-Vol. 6. 19; In 1863 Lincoln composed eleven such messages. Ibid., Vol. 6. 91-358.

<sup>257</sup> 'To Queen Victoria.' 26<sup>th</sup> June 1861. Ibid., Vol. 4. 417.

<sup>258</sup> 'To Isabel II.' 14<sup>th</sup> March 1863. Ibid., Vol. 6. 136.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., Vol. 5. 32.

<sup>260</sup> 'Form Letter to Chaplains.' 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1861. Ibid., 53-54.

Commission, and again there was no mention of the Bible.<sup>261</sup> The announcement of the death and memorialisation of former President Van Buren<sup>262</sup> brought no reference to the Bible, by way of condolence.<sup>263</sup>

There was not always a clear pattern to when and how Lincoln would display the influence of the Bible upon his thinking and compositions. The fact that Lincoln ignored seemingly appropriate opportunities to use the Bible can be understood as an indication that he was not just using the Bible for effect; otherwise he would have always done so whenever the occasion and audience permitted. Lincoln's use of the Bible can appear somewhat random, and yet he employed the Bible at some of the most crucial moments as the highest authority to which he could seek endorsement for his message. From his earliest reading the Bible was present in his thinking, and as President he was measured and somewhat calculated in his public citation and allusion thereof.

### 5.8. The 1862 Address to Congress

In his reflection of 1862, Marvel entitled his work *Lincoln's Darkest Year*,<sup>264</sup> and summarised the year as “The common story of a war growing completely out of hand and overwhelming the people who started it.”<sup>265</sup> Paludan offers the following gruesome assessment: “1862 had baptized the nation in blood.”<sup>266</sup> The *Washington National Intelligencer* published the following assessment of national mood:

Never has such a paper been delivered to the National Legislature under auspices so grave, and rarely, if ever, has one been awaited with equal solicitude by the people of the country.<sup>267</sup>

This Address was one of Lincoln's longest official papers, which consisted of 8451 words.<sup>268</sup> The Address was the forerunner of what is now known as the ‘State of

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<sup>261</sup> ‘To George. H. Stuart: Chairman of Christian Commission.’ 12<sup>th</sup> December 1861; *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>262</sup> Martin Van Buren (1782-1862). In 1832 Van Buren was elected as Vice President to Jackson, and in 1837 became the Eighth President of the United States. Edward L. Widmer, *Martin Van Buren* (New York: Times Books, 2005).

<sup>263</sup> ‘Order for Observance of Death of Martin Van Buren.’ 25<sup>th</sup> July 1862. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 340-341.

<sup>264</sup> Marvel, *Lincoln's Darkest Year*.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, Location 58.

<sup>266</sup> Paludan, *The Presidency*, 60.

<sup>267</sup> *Washington National Intelligencer*. 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1862.

<sup>268</sup> Word count calculated from the text in Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 518-537; Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, 192.

the Union Address.<sup>269</sup> In contrast to modern practice, Lincoln sent the message to a member of the Senate to be read on his behalf. Foner correctly notes that despite its illustrious place in the Lincoln canon, it was actually “to say the least, a curious document.”<sup>270</sup> Despite public interest in the horrific events on the battlefield, Lincoln concentrated on the issues for which the War was being waged, namely the restoration of the Union. The vast majority of the Address is an interesting but hardly inspiring treatment of various governmental businesses.<sup>271</sup>

Williams described this as ‘One of his best ... state papers,’<sup>272</sup> in which “Feelingly he referred to the nation as ‘our national homestead.’”<sup>273</sup> Williams echoes the opinion of many that the concluding paragraph was “one of the best things he ever wrote.”<sup>274</sup> Wilson submitted, “Its conclusion is among the most stirring incitements to patriotic commitment on record.”<sup>275</sup> Foner reflected on Lincoln’s conclusion: “A century and a half later, they remain among the most eloquent ever composed by an American President.”<sup>276</sup> Burlingame described it as “an inspired conclusion, Lincoln supplied the soaring rhetoric.”<sup>277</sup> McPherson reflects Potter’s conclusion that “If the Union and Confederacy had exchanged presidents with one another, the Confederacy might have won its independence.”<sup>278</sup> He points out that Lincoln was a brilliantly clear communicator who was able to articulate the “meaning and purpose” of the War “in an intelligible, inspiring manner that helped mobilize the people to make the

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<sup>269</sup> <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/sou/index.html> accessed 1st September 2011.

<sup>270</sup> Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 2010), 236.

<sup>271</sup> Lincoln’s address is recorded in Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 5*. He discussed the issue of colonization of new territory by “Americans of African decent,” 520-521; He listed and discussed foreign policy issues, 521; The National Finances were reported upon, 522-524. Extremely brief attention was drawn to the reports submitted by the Secretary of War, and the Secretary to the Navy, 524; The improved financial condition of the Post office was detailed, and attention was drawn to the report of the postmaster general, 524-525; Consideration was given to the report from the secretary of the interior, with particular reference to the apparent aggression of the Sioux & Cherokees towards white settlements, 525-526. The Department of Agriculture of the United States was formed, 526; Lincoln’s thoughts on the possibility of compensated emancipation was presented, 527-528.

<sup>272</sup> T. Harry Williams, "Abraham Lincoln: Principle and Pragmatism in Politics: A Review Article." *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 40, no. 1 (1953): 101.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>275</sup> Wilson, *Lincoln’s Sword*, 136.

<sup>276</sup> Foner, *Fiery Trial*, 237.

<sup>277</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 2*. Location 34296.

<sup>278</sup> James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 1990), 93.

sacrifices necessary for victory.”<sup>279</sup> This commentary is exemplified in the conclusion to this Address.

Lincoln presented detailed plans that he concluded with a rallying call: “It is not ‘Can *any* of us *imagine* better?’ but ‘can we *all* do better?’... still the question recurs ‘can we do better?’”<sup>280</sup> This call for ‘better’ immediately gave way to one of Lincoln’s most celebrated flourishes:

The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall our selves, and then we shall save our country.<sup>281</sup>

Lincoln had presented a practical address, which was reminiscent of any keynote from an Annual General Meeting report. The flourish that concluded his treatment of the compensated emancipation issue gave way to an inspiring conclusion, which was directed through Congress to the wider populace.

### **5.8.1. The place of the Bible in the Address**

Lincoln’s Address to Congress began and ended with evidence of his engagement with the Bible. He began with the observation that the destiny of the nation gripped by civil war was a matter of the will and guidance of God:

And while it has not pleased the Almighty to bless us with a return of peace, we can but press on, guided by the best light He gives us, trusting that in His own good time, and wise way, all will yet be well.<sup>282</sup>

Lincoln expressed his belief that a return to peace would be God’s will when it eventually happened, and yet there was no sense of passivity resulting from Lincoln’s apparent awareness of the sovereignty of God. The fact that God was in control of national events did not allow Lincoln’s thinking to become fatalistic. It will be discussed that Lincoln developed a rather detailed understanding of the will of God.<sup>283</sup> Although Lincoln declared this belief in the God’s will he considered it to be the duty of his countrymen was to do their very best. Lincoln was not a preacher; he was a politician, and in his presidency the belief in God’s supremacy was married to a

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<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 93-94.

<sup>280</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 537.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 518.

<sup>283</sup> Lincoln’s treatment of the Will of God will be examined in Section 6.5 of this thesis.

burning desire to do whatever was necessary to secure the permanency of the Republic.

For Lincoln there was no anomaly between reliance on and respect for the sovereignty of God, and the most strenuous human endeavour. The encouragement to ‘press on’ was not just human effort alone; Lincoln considered it necessary to do so “guided by the best light He gives us.”<sup>284</sup> The guidance of God was essential to Lincoln, and he stated at the beginning of this Address that all that needed to be done must happen in accordance with God’s guidance in all their efforts. Despite all the other Lincoln references to the will of God, Wolf considered this address “the high peak in Lincoln’s desire to obey the divine will.”<sup>285</sup> The message then proceeded in an unadorned manner, described by Donald as “entirely routine in nature”<sup>286</sup>, until the aforementioned inspirational conclusion.

The significance of Lincoln’s conclusion is such that Stout referred to it as “A stirring conclusion that would introduce phrases for an American scripture.”<sup>287</sup> Miller reflects upon the contrast between the main body of the message and its conclusion thus: “And then he accompanied this gargyle with some of the most moving and eloquent prose he ever wrote – that any president, any head of state, ever wrote.”<sup>288</sup> The importance of this final section has become so important in historical memory that it warrants full quotation:

Fellow-citizens, *we* cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration, will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance, or insignificance, can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. We *say* we are for the Union. The world will not forget that we say this. We know how to save the Union. The world knows we do know how to save it. We---even *we here*---hold the power, and bear the responsibility. In *giving* freedom to the *slave*, we *assure* freedom to the *free*---honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best, hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just---a

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<sup>284</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 518.

<sup>285</sup> Wolf, *Almost Chosen People*, 158

<sup>286</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 395.

<sup>287</sup> Stout, *Upon the Altar*, 189.

<sup>288</sup> Miller, *President Lincoln*, 270-271.

way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud, and God must forever bless.<sup>289</sup>

Wolf asserted, “This speech is supported by such artistry of words that it remains the masterpiece of Lincoln’s longer speeches.”<sup>290</sup>

In this imperative conclusion Lincoln referred to the national circumstance as the ‘fiery trial.’ It was 36 days before the delivery of this Address that Lincoln had written to Eliza Gurney and observed, “We are indeed going through a great trial---a fiery trial.”<sup>291</sup> White states that Lincoln’s phrase “fiery trial was surely drawn from 1 Peter 4:12.”<sup>292</sup> Peter’s use of the phrase is rendered thus “Beloved think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you.” Although this phrase is comprised of only two words, it is a unique expression and instantly recognisable to a reader of the New Testament. It will therefore be considered as a direct quotation from the Bible. The fact that Lincoln used it twice in five weeks, suggests it was important in Lincoln’s understanding.

The expression ‘fiery trial’ could hardly have been more appropriate to the national circumstance, and it is feasible that Lincoln selected it from the Bible for purely linguistic purposes. However, Lincoln’s knowledge of scripture accompanied by his customarily comprehensive preparation, would allow for the possibility that he was seeking to evoke the context of Peter’s quotation. Peter was addressing an audience that would experience severe persecution; the reason was exclusively their faith.<sup>293</sup> A possible comparison between Peter’s and Lincoln’s readers was that both were suffering in the prosecution of a righteous cause. If Lincoln was intending to evoke the context of Peter’s remarks then the possibility must be considered that this will have been lost on some of his audience. It is important to restate that the hermeneutical works, which have formed the criteria for establishing quotations, suggests that the presence of such is a strong indication of an author’s intent to evoke the original.<sup>294</sup> The value of Lincoln’s choice of language was sufficient reason for its

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<sup>289</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 537.

<sup>290</sup> Wolf, *Almost Chosen People*, 158.

<sup>291</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 478.

<sup>292</sup> Ronald C. White, *The Eloquent President; A Portrait of Lincoln Through His Words* (New York: Random House, 2005), 187.

<sup>293</sup> Peter wrote to Christians would experienced persecution for their faith, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” 1 Peter 4:12-13.

<sup>294</sup> Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, Location 1732; Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 147.

inclusion, but the context of the quotation would surely have strengthened his point in the minds of knowledgeable readers. Once again it can be argued that Lincoln is able to select language that not only evoked the authority of the Bible, but also provided a context that he believed dignified the suffering inflicted by the War.

Lincoln employed the phrase ‘fiery trial’ to anchor his appeal to his colleagues, that they might grasp the fact that they were partakers in history. Lincoln’s conclusion is not utterly dependent upon this biblical phrase, but it provided an authoritative dimension that may not otherwise have been the case. From both a linguist and philosophical perspective Lincoln’s use of the Bible in the Address would prove an important contribution, which would have lessened the power of the text were it omitted. On reflection of this address Briggs acknowledges that although Lincoln chose his moments to engage with the Bible sparingly, “they are among the most memorable.”<sup>295</sup>

The term ‘fiery trial’ has become something of an anchor in historical memory. It is interesting to note the recent, major contributions to Lincoln scholarship that derive their title from this sentence.<sup>296</sup> Another example of the power of Lincoln’s use of the Bible in historical memory is a 1998 review of the new exhibition at the Lincoln Museum, Indiana<sup>297</sup> The exhibition contained a centrepiece comprising a three-part presentation on the key events of the Sixteenth Presidency, the title of which was “The Fiery Trial.”<sup>298</sup> Even though 133 years had then passed since Lincoln’s assassination, his phrase adopted from the Bible was instantly recognized at this important event.

Prokopowicz described the sentence containing the phrase as both “half-promise-half-warning,”<sup>299</sup> and his assessment is that Lincoln “knew that he could make no stronger appeal.”<sup>300</sup> Lincoln selected a phrase from the Bible to make this strong appeal, and it is reasonable to assert that at certain crucial moments that

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<sup>295</sup> Briggs, *Lincoln’s Speeches*, 304.

<sup>296</sup> A selection of modern books containing Lincoln’s biblical phrase “Fiery Trial.” Foner, *The Fiery Trial*; Gienapp, *This Fiery Trial*; Stephen B. Oates, *Our Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln, John Brown and the Civil War Era* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1979); Herbert Mitgang, *The Fiery Trial: A Life of Lincoln* (New York: Viking Press, 1974).

<sup>297</sup> The Lincoln Museum in Indiana is home to the largest privately owned collection of Lincoln material. W.A. Firstenberger, “Abraham Lincoln and the American Experiment: Exhibition Review,” *The Journal of American History* 85, no. 1 (1998): 174.

<sup>298</sup> Firstenberger, *American Experiment*, 175.

<sup>299</sup> G.J. Prokopowicz, “Word of Honor: Abraham Lincoln and the Parole System in the Civil War,” in Charles M. Hubbard, ed. *Lincoln Reshapes The Presidency* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003), 38.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*

required the most authoritative language, it was the Bible that furnished the inspiration. The components of this conclusion are all essential, but the character and imperative nature would have been weakened without the sentence constructed upon the words of 1 Peter 4:12. Lincoln's secretaries made full quotation of his conclusion, and described it as a "patriotic appeal",<sup>301</sup> but writing just decades after the War, their concentration was upon the immediate effect of the Address, which failed to end the war and resulted in the Emancipation proclamation being issued after the failure of the South to accept Lincoln's compensated emancipation offer.<sup>302</sup> The issue of emancipation rather than the majesty of Lincoln's text gripped the immediate attention of the 1862 public. Indeed, the Message to Congress and then the Emancipation Proclamation were of such importance that the far-reaching nature of Lincoln's language would be left to future generations to appreciate. McPherson submits that Lincoln's conclusion was "of unsurpassed eloquence and power."<sup>303</sup> Although it is not feasible to submit that Lincoln's use of the Bible here is of an essential nature, it can be contended that it was an important part of his rhetoric.

The Address ended with the prospect of approval of the worldwide populace and most importantly the promise of assurance of Divine blessing:

We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best, hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just---a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud, and God must forever bless.<sup>304</sup>

It is interesting that Lincoln, who demonstrated such humility in the light of the lofty nature of Divine Sovereignty, should speak of the national cause with such certainty that he considered that God 'must' bless. This is not to be understood as vitriolic, but as Lincoln's certainty of the justice of the cause.

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<sup>301</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 6.* 401.

<sup>302</sup> No immediate action followed this patriotic appeal. No indication of reviving unionism were manifested in distinctively rebel States. No popular expression of a willingness to abandon slavery and accept compensation came from loyal border slave states ... Thus the month of December wore away." *Ibid.*, 401 & 405.

<sup>303</sup> James M. McPherson, "Lincoln's Legacy for our Time," in Hubbard, *Lincoln Reshapes*, 225.

<sup>304</sup> Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 5.* 537.



### **5.8.2. In conclusion to the Address to Congress**

In his introduction to a collection of Lincoln speeches, Gienapp described Lincoln as “The most eloquent president in our history.”<sup>305</sup> This Address is considered to be a major contribution to that reputation of excellence; indeed, White states, “His words transcended the limitations of the event... in words that deserve to be known alongside the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural Address.”<sup>306</sup> Miller stated that the concluding words of this Address would carry permanent significance as, “phrases that would ring forever thereafter in American memory.”<sup>307</sup> In this thesis the point has been made that Lincoln’s role was as President not preacher; however, he considered the Bible to have unique value and authority, and here is an example of his measured usage to reinforce his message with the ultimate citation: “Frequently, Lincoln employed a verse from the Bible to clinch a point.”<sup>308</sup> The conclusion of one of the most testing years in American history was crowned with a paragraph that is almost universally admired: a paragraph built around a phrase lifted from the King James Bible.

### **5.9. In conclusion to Chapter Five**

Lincoln left Springfield and continued the practice that had served him on his unlikely journey to the highest office. He used the Bible to illustrate and punctuate his message. He did not use it all the time, reserving it for moments in which he considered nothing else but its supreme authority would suffice. This chapter demonstrates the fact that the Bible’s influence continued to feature in Lincoln’s political speeches and writings as he commenced the sixteenth presidency. Indeed, he not only used the Bible in his delivery, but also used it in such a way that its absence would have either weakened or altered his thinking and message, and in turn would surely have lessened his success and the significance of his legacy.

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<sup>305</sup> Gienapp, *This Fiery Trial*, Location 92.

<sup>306</sup> White, *Eloquent President*, 189.

<sup>307</sup> Miller, *President Lincoln*, 271.

<sup>308</sup> Elton Trueblood, *Abraham Lincoln: A Spiritual Biography, Theologian of American Anguish* (New York: Walker and Company, 1986), 80.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE MARCH TO UNION VICTORY AND A SECOND TERM

#### 6.1. Introduction

This chapter will examine and evaluate the place of the Bible in the speeches and writings of the latter part of Lincoln's Presidency. The year 1863 concluded with Lincoln's delivery of one of history's most celebrated speeches, the Gettysburg Address. The narrative of Lincoln's Presidency during the War years of 1864 and 1865 will be briefly explored. Throughout the War Lincoln focused his thoughts and remarks on the subject of the will of God. He wrestled with the questions that the majority of Americans were asking, namely what were the purposes of God amongst the carnage? Lincoln's treatment of this topic will be examined in a designated section of this chapter. A great deal of scholarly reliance has been placed upon the opinions and reflections of William Herndon regarding Lincoln's beliefs and his engagement with the Bible. His credentials to comment were considerable, and many historians have accepted his assertions that Lincoln was basically an 'infidel.' During the course of this research some new material was discovered in Herndon's own handwriting. Herndon's treatment of Lincoln and the Bible will be examined particularly in the light of this discovery. During this period Lincoln used the Bible with dexterity and originality; the power of his contribution is still celebrated in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### 6.2. The Gettysburg Address

The Battle of Gettysburg proved to be a pivotal victory that resulted in Union triumph. This victory was also an example of the horrific human cost of the War. Union Colonel Oates, a veteran of Gettysburg who wrote an account of the engagement, calculated that,

The whole number of men of each side ... aggregated 160,000 and the aggregate of losses was 53,433 ... (this) was heavier than the Battle of Waterloo or any of the great European battles of modern times. During the

three days of fighting the aggregate amount of lead and iron shot ... was five hundred and sixty tons. It is surprising that so many survived.<sup>1</sup>

On 19<sup>th</sup> November 1863 the battlefield was dedicated as a national cemetery.<sup>2</sup> To mark the occasion the renowned orator Edward Everett<sup>3</sup> was invited to deliver the main address.<sup>4</sup> The President was invited<sup>5</sup> to offer a few dedicatory remarks to “formally set apart these grounds to their sacred use by a few appropriate remarks.”<sup>6</sup>

When the day for the dedication arrived, both speakers distinguished themselves. Hay recorded this diary entry, “Everett spoke as he always does, perfectly. And the President, in a firm free way, with more grace than is his want, said his half-dozen lines of consecration.”<sup>7</sup> Lincoln’s tiny Address consisted of 272 words that *The New York Tribune* recorded as interrupted by applause five times, with extended applause at the conclusion.<sup>8</sup>

Immediate reaction to Lincoln’s performance was mixed. The influential publication *The Patriot and Union* recorded a very negative commentary,<sup>9</sup> while the Massachusetts State delegate reported the Address leaving “a profound impression.”<sup>10</sup> *Harper’s Weekly* reported the Address thus, “it was as simple and felicitous and earnest a word as was ever spoken.”<sup>11</sup> Everett wrote to Lincoln the day after the dedication and included the following:

Permit me also to express my great admiration of the thoughts expressed by you, with such eloquent simplicity & appropriateness ... I should be

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<sup>1</sup> Glen LaFantasie, ed. *Gettysburg: Colonel William C. Oates and Lieutenant Frank A. Haskell* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 140.

<sup>2</sup> Boritt, *Gettysburg Gospel*, 50.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Everett (1794-1865) was a Harvard scholar and one of the most celebrated American political figures of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He served in Congress and the US Senate, as well as Governor of Massachusetts and US Secretary of State. Gabor S. Boritt, *The Gettysburg Gospel: The Lincoln Speech that Nobody Knows* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008), 98, 207.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>6</sup> [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?mal:13:/temp/~ammem\\_xEKn](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?mal:13:/temp/~ammem_xEKn) "Letter from David Wills to Lincoln," The Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress, accessed 19<sup>th</sup> May 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Orton H. Carmichael, *Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address* (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1917), 80.

<sup>8</sup> Herbert V. Prochnow, *Great Stories from Great Lives: A Gallery of Portraits from Famous Biographies* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1944), 15.

<sup>9</sup> “We pass over the silly remarks of the President; For the credit of the nation we are willing that the veil of oblivion shall be dropped over them and that they shall no more be repeated or thought of.” Carmichael, *Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address*, 80.

<sup>10</sup> A correspondent for the *Boston Daily Advertiser* was also part of the Massachusetts delegation and reported, “Mr Lincoln’s dedicatory remarks created a most favourable impression. They were delivered in a clear full voice and seemed to be emphatically the right words in the right place.” Henry S. Burrage, *Gettysburg and Lincoln: The Battle, the Cemetery, and the National Park* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1906), 124.

<sup>11</sup> *Harper’s Weekly*, 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1863.

glad, if I could flatter myself that I came as near to the central idea of the occasion, in two hours, as you did in two minutes.<sup>12</sup>

The fact is that Lincoln's Address would become one of the most important pieces of American prose. The Lincoln Memorial in Washington bears its complete text. A contemporary view praised the Address, "which for conciseness, force and simply eloquence, is regarded as one of the masterpieces of oratory."<sup>13</sup> By the early part of the twentieth century the Address had obtained an almost legendary status. In 1902 Oakleaf offered his assessment that it had "no peer in the English language."<sup>14</sup> By 1922 the Address had become one of the most important documents in American historical memory. Henderson published it alongside Washington's Farewell address and Webster's Bunker Hill Oration, declaring that the three speeches "combine to present a valuable lesson in true Americanism."<sup>15</sup> The final year of the Second World War would see the following evaluation, "There is loftiness of thought and majesty of phrase in the Gettysburg Address."<sup>16</sup> A somewhat typical example of modern regard for the Address is rendered thus, "The single most memorable document of the Civil War."<sup>17</sup> The importance of the Address is almost unquestioned. Another feature of the Address are the indications of Lincoln's engagement with the Bible in its composition.

### 6.2.1. The influence of the Bible

In a recent treatment of the place of the Bible in the Address, Elmore examines a significant aspect of Lincoln's approach to important speeches. He makes the point that Lincoln was not merely well acquainted with, but actually memorized sections of the Bible.<sup>18</sup> Today the practice of memorization is not as widespread, due to the instant accessibility of information, which Elmore cited as a factor to explain modern scholars who "have so often overlooked this rich vein of precisely memorized

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<sup>12</sup> [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mal:@field\(DOCID+@lit](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mal:@field(DOCID+@lit) "Letter from Edward Everett to Lincoln," The Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress, accessed 19th May 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Albion H. Bicknell, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: In Connection with the Exhibition of the Historical Painting of 'Lincoln at Gettysburg.'* (Boston: Doll and Richards, 1879), 5.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph B. Oakleaf, *An Analysis of the Gettysburg Address* (Mouline: Desaulniers and Co. Printers, 1908), 8.

<sup>15</sup> H.E. Henderson, ed. *Washington's Farewell Address, Webster's First Bunker Hill Oration, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1922), 8.

<sup>16</sup> Louis A. Warren, *Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address: An Evaluation* (New York: Charles E. Merrill Co. Inc., 1946), 8.

<sup>17</sup> Michael P. Musick, "An Address for the Ages: Lincoln, Gettysburg and the Papers of the Presidents." *Prologue Magazine: Quarterly of the National Archives* 27, no. 3 (1995).

<sup>18</sup> Elmore, *Lincoln's Gettysburg Address*, 23.

language.”<sup>19</sup> He suggests that Lincoln possessed a stockpile of “memorized language – much of it from his beloved King James Bible – that Lincoln carried around in his head and echoed in all his speeches.”<sup>20</sup> Lincoln’s own admission was that once he memorized something, it was a permanent feature in his thinking:

I am slow to learn and slow to forget that which I have learned. My mind is like a piece of steel, very hard to scratch anything on it and almost impossible after you get it there to rub it out.<sup>21</sup>

Warren offered the following observation; “There was something in the peculiar way in which Lincoln expressed himself that reminded the listener of the Bible.”<sup>22</sup> Elmore is concerned with the dual influence of the Bible and *The Book of Common Prayer*, and much of his treatment of the Bible’s influence upon Lincoln examines the stylistic.<sup>23</sup> Warren opinion was that “Lincoln’s literary style ... his simple but impressive diction can be traced to the Bible.”<sup>24</sup>

The Address commenced with the words, “Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation.”<sup>25</sup> Sandburg considered the question of why Lincoln had not simply said “eighty-seven years ago,” and concluded that it was “Probably ... because in the Old Testament it reads most often ‘two score’ instead of ‘forty,’ and ‘four score’ instead of ‘eighty.’”<sup>26</sup> While it is important to note the influence of the language of the King James Bible upon the rhythm and cadence of the Address, it is not the intention of this thesis to deeply examine Lincoln’s linguistics. The issue is the use of the Bible in as much as its words and message influenced Lincoln’s political writing and speaking. This linguistic point is offered as further example of the possible depth to which the Bible had penetrated Lincoln’s thought patterns. Gary Wills remained unconvinced about the Bible’s influence upon Lincoln’s preparation of this Address. He submits that it is more a transcendental work, questioning the genuineness of Lincoln’s employment of biblical themes and

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Speed gave this quotation to Herndon on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 1866. Fehrenbacher and Fehrenbacher, *Recollected Words*, 413.

<sup>22</sup> Warren, *Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address*, 10.

<sup>23</sup> In chapters 4, 5, and 6 Elmore especially deals with the Bible’s linguistic influence. He commences chapter 10 by identifying the importance of style on the Gettysburg Address, “Lincoln’s style is so beautiful that it alone makes the Gettysburg Address immortal.” Elmore, *Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address*, 190.

<sup>24</sup> Warren, *Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address*, 10.

<sup>25</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7. 23.

<sup>26</sup> Carl Sandburg, *Lincoln’s Devotional* (Great Neck: Channel Press, 1957), viii.

allusions. Wills referred to Theodore Parker who “found Lincoln to be more clever than principled.”<sup>27</sup> Wills develops his argument based substantially upon the testimony of Herndon, who believed that transcendentalist Parker was an influence of Lincoln:

If ... I was called upon to designate an author whose religious views most nearly represented Mr. Lincoln on this subject (religion), I would say that author was Theodore Parker.<sup>28</sup>

Wills then states that Herndon’s claim that Lincoln was an infidel did not make him non-religious; it made him spiritual in a wider sense. This is a similar argument to that which was offered in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as Ingersoll railed at Collis<sup>29</sup> on the subject of deists rather than Transcendentalists, “Deists and Christians believe in the same God, but they differ as to what this God has done, and as to what this God will do.”<sup>30</sup> The following examination of the content of Lincoln’s text will seek to demonstrate that there are indeed strong indications that Lincoln was profoundly influenced by the Bible’s message and text.

#### **6.2.1.1. Dying to bring life**

At Gettysburg Lincoln stated, “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.”<sup>31</sup> There is a substantial case for suggesting that Lincoln’s predominantly Christian audience would have considered the concept of death bringing life to be a biblical concept.

In John 12:24 Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” Jesus was speaking of his own impending vicarious sacrifice, but the principle he employed is a matter of natural law, as well as spiritual principle. Jesus also spoke of the cost of true discipleship. He spoke of laying life down in order to gain the greater eternal glory. Jesus mentioned this concept at six junctures in the Gospels. The first example is found in Matthew 10:39, “He that findeth his life shall lose it and he that

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<sup>27</sup> Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 91.

<sup>28</sup> Will’s quotation of Herndon. *Ibid.*, 108

<sup>29</sup> The debate between Ingersoll and Collis was discussed in Section 5.2.3 of this thesis.

<sup>30</sup> Collis, *Religion of Abraham Lincoln*, Location 34.

<sup>31</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7. 23.

loses his life for my sake shall find it.” The other five occasions are identical in substance, with slight linguistic variance.<sup>32</sup>

The words of Lincoln had entered the American consciousness by the occasion of the fiftieth Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. President Wilson included allusion to Lincoln’s words, “These venerable men crowding here to this famous field have set up a great example of devotion and utter sacrifice. They were willing to die that the people might live.”<sup>33</sup> The material examined thus far has demonstrated that if Lincoln wanted to offer direct quotation, paraphrase or substantial allusion to the Bible, he was not averse to doing so. It is unlikely that Lincoln was deliberately attempting to draw specific parallel between his remark and the Gospels. Elmore’s suggestion, that Lincoln ‘carried around in his head’ passages of the Bible might be helpful here. If there is any possibility of this being an example of his engagement with scripture then the type of biblical reception at play would be an echo. Beale considers that the inclusion of a biblical echo indicates an unconscious dependence of the author upon the text.<sup>34</sup> It is therefore suggested that Lincoln’s remark at Gettysburg is an unconscious echo of Jesus’ teaching on the potential of death bringing life.

### **6.2.1.2. Birth and new birth**

The Address contains one reference to the nation’s birth and one to its re-birth; these concepts of birth and rebirth are essential to the effectiveness of the Address.

Lincoln commenced with the concept of the nation actually being conceived and born, “our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty.”<sup>35</sup> Elmore claims to recognize the influence of the Gospels in Lincoln’s metaphor, the terms ‘conceived’ and ‘brought forth’ being lifted from the texts of Matthew and Luke.<sup>36</sup> Indeed Matthew 1:20-21 declares that Joseph received a visitation with the following message, “Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel.” The Gospel

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<sup>32</sup> The theme of laying down one’s life for greater eternal glory is mentioned by Jesus in the following verses, Matthew 16:25, Mark 8:35, Luke 9:24, Luke 17:33, and John 12:25.

<sup>33</sup> Mario R. Di Nunzio, ed. *Woodrow Wilson: Essential Writings and Speeches of the Scholar-President* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 370.

<sup>34</sup> Beale, *Handbook*, Location 770.

<sup>35</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7. 23.

<sup>36</sup> Elmore, *Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address*, 41

narrative connected this message with the messianic prophecy, “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son” (Matthew 1:23 referring to Isaiah 7:14). Luke engages the term ‘brought forth’ in the narrative of the birth of both John the Baptist and Jesus, “Now Elisabeth’s full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son” (Luke 1:57). The phrase is also found in the Bethlehem narrative, “And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes.” (Luke 2:7). Although Luke uses the word ‘conceived,’ it actually appears after the birth of Jesus<sup>37</sup> at the circumcision of the child, “till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS” (Matthew 1:25). The phrase ‘brought forth’ actually occurs on 73 occasions in the Bible.<sup>38</sup> Two of these occasions refer to God’s activity at creation,<sup>39</sup> and the remainder at various moments, for example the phrase is used to describe God’s deliverance from Egyptian slavery, and in the context of the sick being laid in the streets for the Apostle Peter to heal.<sup>40</sup>

Both Lincoln and Matthew employed the words conceived and ‘brought forth,’ in the same thought. The fact that the term ‘brought forth’ is used so many times in the Bible could be submitted in the light of Elmore’s considerations, that Lincoln’s excellent biblical knowledge furnished him with this elegant turn of phrase. The Birth of Jesus represented new hope, and the tenor of Lincoln’s address indicates that he considered the birth of the American Republic also to have represented new hope for mankind. The previous suggestion, in Section 6.2.1.1, is applicable to this instance. It appears that Lincoln employed a biblical echo, which was probably unconscious but nonetheless an indication of the influence of the Bible in his formulation of important compositions.

### 6.2.1.3. New birth

When Everett wrote to Lincoln of his admiration for the Address, he expressed his thought that Lincoln had captured “the central idea of the occasion.”<sup>41</sup> It is difficult to

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<sup>37</sup> “And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.” Luke 2:21.

<sup>38</sup> Strong, *New Strong’s Concordance*.

<sup>39</sup> “And the earth brought forth grass” Genesis 1:12; “And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth.” Genesis 1:21.

<sup>40</sup> “Since the day I brought forth my people Israel out of Egypt.” 1 Kings 8:6; “Insomuch they brought forth the sick into the street and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.” Acts 5:15.

<sup>41</sup> [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mal:@field\(DOCID+@lit1](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mal:@field(DOCID+@lit1) The Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. “Letter from Edward Everett to Lincoln,” accessed 19<sup>th</sup> May 2012.



know exactly what Lincoln himself considered that ‘idea’ to be. Elmore offers the credible suggestion that the metaphor of national rebirth is the “central idea.”<sup>42</sup>

Lincoln declared, “that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom.”<sup>43</sup> Lincoln’s phrase ‘new birth’ is convincingly reminiscent of the teachings of Jesus. In John 3:3-8 Jesus explained to Nicodemus that spiritual rebirth is essential in order to “see the Kingdom of God.” Jesus spoke of that which is already born needing then to be ‘born again.’<sup>44</sup> The American Republic was already born, but Lincoln considered it required a “new birth of freedom.”<sup>45</sup> The theological notes from his childhood Bible offered the following commentary on this text, “That carnal man cannot enter into the Kingdom of God; and that, in order to be admitted there, we must become new creatures.”<sup>46</sup> Lincoln’s use of the term is almost universally accepted by historians, of varying perspectives, to be drawn from Jesus’ ‘born again.’ The criteria for identifying Lincoln’s biblical reception would suggest this to be an example of an allusion. The language and contextual similarity fulfil Leonard’s criteria for a biblical allusion.<sup>47</sup> It is interesting to reflect upon Lincoln’s use of this allusion in the light of McLean’s thinking. He suggests that the reader who seeks to apply the Bible to contemporary events is in a sense a “midwife of meaning,”<sup>48</sup> and speaks of the possibility for “us to replay and contextualize the sense of biblical events in our time.”<sup>49</sup> If Lincoln was applying the Bible’s thoughts on new birth to the destiny of the Union, then it could be suggested that he was something of a ‘midwife of meaning;’ indeed the illustrious treatment of this address in historical memory suggests he brought new meaning to the tragedy of the War.

Braden asserts, “The paramount reason that the Gettysburg Address has endured is that it is a moving pronouncement about freedom.”<sup>50</sup> The dramatic events of the War required dramatic language to express the momentous effects upon the population. Lincoln proved equal to the occasion, it is suggested that this was due in considerable measure to his careful selection of words inspired by the Bible.

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<sup>42</sup> “The metaphor of birth and rebirth is the unifying and overarching metaphor of the Gettysburg Address.” Elmore, *Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address*, 40.

<sup>43</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7. 23.

<sup>44</sup> John 3:16.

<sup>45</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7. 23.

<sup>46</sup> *Ostervald Bible*, Commentary notes on the text of John 3:16.

<sup>47</sup> Leonard, “Inner-Biblical Allusions,” 253.

<sup>48</sup> Bradley H. McLean, *Biblical Interpretation and Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 275.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 33

<sup>50</sup> Braden, *Abraham Lincoln*, 86.

### **6.2.2. In conclusion to the Gettysburg Address**

The place of the Address in American political culture is of paramount significance. Not only for its message, but also for its linguistic prowess, “The Battle of Gettysburg not only made history but it also made literature.”<sup>51</sup> On the Dodranscentennial of Lincoln’s original delivery, *Life Magazine* described it simply as the “immortal Gettysburg Address.”<sup>52</sup> It was 101 years after the Address that King wrote, “In one respect Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address marks as sharp a change in American literature, as did the Battle of Gettysburg in American history.”<sup>53</sup> The Gettysburg Address occupies an almost unique place in American history. The contention of this thesis is that this was due in considerable part to the important influence of the Bible upon its composition.

### **6.3. The Lincoln Presidency during the years 1864 and 1865**

The final year of Lincoln’s first term would give way to the commencement of his second, only the third time in the Republic’s history that the nation returned its chief executive. The War continued to dangle the prospects of both victory and defeat, while Lincoln would eventually achieve the pinnacle of his oratorical prowess.

#### **6.3.1. The Lincoln Presidency during 1864**

The year 1864 proved to be a season of great potential and great danger, both politically and militarily. By May the transforming events of the year prompted this assessment from Wendell Phillips, “The youngest of us are never again to see the republic in which we were born.”<sup>54</sup> The year would continue to decisively shape the Union’s destiny.

In March Lincoln appointed Grant as General in Chief of the Union Army.<sup>55</sup> This proved to be one of Lincoln’s most important decisions; he wanted Grant for his offensive qualities and the General did not disappoint. Lincoln’s new commander would deliver victory, but as was almost always the case during the War, triumph was

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<sup>51</sup> “Gettysburg: America’s Epic Battle.” *Life Magazine*, June 1938, 37.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>53</sup> Willard L. King, “Lincoln at Gettysburg,” *American Bar Association Journal* 50, no. 11 (1964): 1036.

<sup>54</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1988. Reprint, New York: First Perennial Classics, 2002), 29.

<sup>55</sup> Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant*, 342.

coupled with staggering casualty figures. Grant presided over a number of major engagements in 1864, namely the Battles of the Wilderness,<sup>56</sup> Spotsylvania,<sup>57</sup> and Cold Harbor.<sup>58</sup> Following the disastrous events of Cold Harbor, Grant established the Union forces outside Petersburg, and settled in for his siege of Richmond.

In the western theatre Sherman was pitted against Confederate forces commanded by General Joseph E. Johnston, and subsequently General John Bell Hood. This eventually resulted in the successful Union capture of Atlanta.<sup>59</sup> A further example of the erratic nature of Union fortunes during 1864 was the Confederate's summer raid, which briefly threatened the outskirts of Washington.<sup>60</sup> This instance is extraordinary because Lincoln had travelled to Fort Stevens to witness the engagement. During his observation the President came under fire from a Confederate sniper.<sup>61</sup> The final major engagements of the year were the Battles of Franklin<sup>62</sup> and Nashville.<sup>63</sup> Sherman would then execute his famous march to the sea, eventually occupying the city of Savannah, thus concluding 1864 with a note of Union triumph.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> The Battle of the Wilderness (5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> May 1864). Gordon C. Rhea, *The Battle of the Wilderness: May 5-6, 1864* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994); William C. Davis, *The Battlefields of the Civil War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000); McPherson's quotation is taken from, James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction, Third Edition* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001), 448.

<sup>57</sup> The Battle of Spotsylvania (8<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> May 1864). William D. Matter, *If it Takes All Summer: The Battle of Spotsylvania* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988); The veteran's quotation is taking from Gordon C. Rhea, *The Battles for Spotsylvania Court House and the Road to Yellow Tavern: May 7-12, 1864* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997. Reprint, 2005), 288; McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*.

<sup>58</sup> The Battle of Cold Harbor, (31<sup>st</sup> May – 12<sup>th</sup> June 1864). Gordon C. Rhea, *Cold Harbor: Grant and Lee, May 26 – June 3 1864* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002. Reprint, 2008), 473; Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant*, 344.

<sup>59</sup> Albert E. Castel, *Decision in the West: The Atlanta Campaign of 1864* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1995); Phillip L. Secrist, *Sherman's 1864 Trial of Battle to Atlanta* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2006); Stanley P. Hirshson, *The White Tecumseh: A Biography of William T. Sherman* (New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1997); Edward G. Longacre, *Worthy Opponents: William T. Sherman and Joseph E. Johnston, Antagonists in War, Friends in Peace* (Nashville: Rutledge Hill Press, 2006).

<sup>60</sup> Jubal A. Early, *A Memoir of the Last Year of the Last Year of the War of Independence in the Confederate States of America* (Lynchburg: Charles W. Button, 1866. Reprint, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001); Benjamin F. Cooling, and W.H. Owen, *Mr Lincoln's Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defences of Washington* (Shippensburg: White Mane Publishing Company Inc., 1988. Reprint, Lanham: Roman and Littlefield Publishing Group Inc., 2010).

<sup>61</sup> Jack E. Schairer, *Lee's Bold Plan for Point Lookout: The Rescue of Confederate Prisoners that Never Happened* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company Inc., 2008), 210-211.

<sup>62</sup> The Battle of Franklin (30<sup>th</sup> November 1864) Benjamin F. Cooling, *The Battles of Franklin and Nashville and Beyond: Stabilization and Reconstruction in Tennessee and Kentucky, 1864-1865* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 2011); Richard M. McMurry, *John Bell Hood and the War for Southern Independence* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1982. Reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992); Brian C. Miller, *John Bell Hood and the Fight for Civil War Memory* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2010).

<sup>63</sup> The Battle of Nashville (15<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> December 1864). James L. McDonough, *Nashville: The Western Confederacy's Final Gamble* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004); Cooling, *The Battles*

Amidst the tumultuous military activities, the administrative business of domestic politics continued. Nevada was admitted as a State of the Union on the 31<sup>st</sup> October.<sup>65</sup> There was also the matter of a Presidential election campaign. Lincoln's historical status makes it difficult for the modern mind to grasp the unpopularity and indifference with which he was perceived by many of his fellow countrymen. Lincoln's re-election was by no means a foregone conclusion.<sup>66</sup> On the 8<sup>th</sup> June the Republicans nominated Lincoln for a second term.<sup>67</sup> However, a new Vice Presidential candidate was selected, Andrew Johnson from Tennessee.<sup>68</sup> On Monday 4<sup>th</sup> July Lincoln would take the bold political step of 'pocket vetoing' the Wade-Davis-Bill.<sup>69</sup> The action was bold, in that it provoked a considerable backlash from radicals within Lincoln's own Republican Party.<sup>70</sup> On Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> November Lincoln was re-elected as President.<sup>71</sup>

### 6.3.2. The Lincoln Presidency in 1865

On Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 1865, Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment. It would prove to be "one of the most important pieces of legislation in American history."<sup>72</sup>

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*Of Franklin*; Christopher J. Einolf, *George Thomas: Virginian for the Union* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 281.

<sup>64</sup> Sherman's March from Atlanta to Savannah (15<sup>th</sup> November – 21<sup>st</sup> December 1864). McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 805-812; William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman*. Vol. 2. (New York: Appleton and Company, 1875), 398; Hirshson, *The White Tecumseh*, 252; John G. Barrett, *Sherman's March Through the Carolinas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956).

<sup>65</sup> Russell R. Elliott, *History of Nevada: Second Revised Edition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 89; Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8. 83-84.

<sup>66</sup> The circumstances of the 1864 presidential election are briefly examined by way of furnishing context to Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, Chapter Seven of this thesis.

<sup>67</sup> John C. Waugh, *Re-electing Lincoln: The Battle for the 1864 Presidency* (New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1997), 200.

<sup>68</sup> Andrew Johnson (1808-1875) served as Lincoln second Vice-President and following Lincoln's assassination was inaugurated as the seventeenth US President. Eric L. McKittrick, *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960. Reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Hans L. Trefousse, *Andrew Johnson: A Biography* (London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989); [www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/andrewjohnson](http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/andrewjohnson) accessed 12<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

<sup>69</sup> In December 1863 Lincoln proposed a generous process by which Confederate States could be readmitted into the Union. The Wade-Davis-Bill sought to impose must stricter terms. Lincoln refused to sign it in an act known as a Pocket Veto. Michael Beschloss, ed. *Our Documents: 100 Milestone Documents from the National Archives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); J.E. Fowler, "Wade-Davis Bill 1864," in Richard Zuczek, ed. *Encyclopaedia of the Reconstruction Era*. Vol. 2. (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group Inc., 2006), 702-703; E. Tscheschlok, "Wade-Davis Bill," in Junius P. Rodriguez, ed. *Slavery In The United States: A Social, Political and Historical Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 1. (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO Inc., 2007), 499.

<sup>70</sup> Tscheschlok, *Wade-Davis Bill*, 499.

<sup>71</sup> Oates, *Malice Toward None*, 400.

<sup>72</sup> R.J. Keller, "That Which Congress so Nobly Began: The Men Who Passed the Thirteenth Amendment Resolution," in Holzer, and Gabbard, *Lincoln and Freedom*, 195.

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation only offered freedom to slaves in certain states, while this Amendment "outlawed slavery and involuntary servitude throughout the country."<sup>73</sup> Lincoln's commitment to the Amendment is demonstrated in the fact that he actually signed the Bill on the 1<sup>st</sup> February,<sup>74</sup> which he was not required to do.<sup>75</sup> Tsesis stated that Lincoln's efforts to successfully adopt the Amendment were essential.<sup>76</sup> On the 4<sup>th</sup> March Lincoln delivered arguably his most important speech, his Second Inaugural Address.<sup>77</sup> On the 2<sup>nd</sup> April the Confederates abandoned the Rebel capital of Richmond, Virginia.<sup>78</sup> On the 4<sup>th</sup> April Lincoln made a triumphant visit to Richmond.<sup>79</sup> On the 9<sup>th</sup> April the Civil War effectively ended when General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Court House.<sup>80</sup> On the 11<sup>th</sup> April Lincoln delivered his last speech.<sup>81</sup> On the 14<sup>th</sup> April disgruntled Confederate sympathizer and celebrated actor John Wilkes Booth<sup>82</sup> shot Lincoln at Ford's Theatre, Washington D.C.<sup>83</sup> President Abraham Lincoln died from the effects of his wound at 7.22am on the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1865.<sup>84</sup>

#### **6.4. General use of the Bible during 1864 and 1865**

The pressures of the wartime government consumed Lincoln's activities. During the last sixteen months of his life he only offered two addresses that could be considered major works. The first was his Annual Message to Congress on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 1864;<sup>85</sup> the other was his Second Inaugural Address.<sup>86</sup> The majority of Lincoln's writing during this period was administrative notes and memorandums. In 1864 he

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<sup>73</sup> Michael Vorenberg, *Final Freedom: The Civil War, the Abolition of Slavery, and the Thirteenth Amendment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>74</sup> White, *Lincoln*, Location 11426.

<sup>75</sup> M. Vorenberg, "Citizenship And The Thirteenth Amendment: Understanding The Defining Silence," in Alexander Tsesis, ed. *The History and Contemporary Relevance of the Thirteenth Amendment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 58;

<sup>76</sup> Alexander Tsesis, ed. *The Thirteenth Amendment and American Freedom: A Legal History* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 47.

<sup>77</sup> The nature and importance Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address requires extended coverage. It will therefore be examined in Chapter Seven of this thesis.

<sup>78</sup> Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate State of Richmond: A Biography of the Capital* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998. Reprint, 2008), 193-194.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*, 511.

<sup>80</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 847-850.

<sup>81</sup> Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 8*. 399-405.

<sup>82</sup> Steers, *Blood on the Moon*, chap. 3 contains treatment of Booth's circumstances and character.

<sup>83</sup> White, *Lincoln*, Location 11770.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, Location 11783.

<sup>85</sup> Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 8*. 136-152.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 332-333.

delivered eighteen short speeches,<sup>87</sup> with eleven in 1865.<sup>88</sup> These were mostly responses to addresses or serenades.

Lincoln made comment regarding his consideration of the value of the Bible, in his response to the resolutions of the American Baptist Home Mission Society.<sup>89</sup> When a delegation of African Americans presented Lincoln with a Bible, he used his expression of gratitude to speak of the place of the Bible in his thinking:

In regard to this Great Book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to man. 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 desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it. To you I return my most sincere thanks for the very elegant copy of the great book of God which you present.<sup>90</sup>

In these remarks Lincoln continued his thought of utter reliance on God, and expressed dependence on the Bible, declaring it to be the ultimate source of truth. For Lincoln all issues of 'right and wrong' were solved in the text and message of the Bible.<sup>91</sup> He restated the supremacy of the scripture's value as a source of human "welfare," in this life and eternity.<sup>92</sup> It is a matter of note that Lincoln commenced and concluded by describing the Bible as "The Great Book."<sup>93</sup> Madison Peters considered that this quotation confirmed Lincoln's "belief in the divine inspiration of God's word as revealed in the holy scriptures."<sup>94</sup>

Morel explains that although the press picked up Lincoln's remarks, he had originally considered that his comments were to a private audience and was therefore expressing something of his true thinking.<sup>95</sup> Corson rejected claims that Lincoln was a sceptic and cited his treatment of the Bible, adding that Lincoln's own comment on the Bible was testimony to its value to him. In support of this position he offered the above quotation of Lincoln's.<sup>96</sup> Peterson submits Lincoln's quotation in support of the

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<sup>87</sup> Calculation taken from *Ibid.*, *Vols. 7 and 8*.

<sup>88</sup> Calculation taken from *Ibid.*, *Vol. 7*.

<sup>89</sup> 30<sup>th</sup> May 1864, 'To George B. Ide, James R. Doolittle, and A. Hubbell.' *Ibid.*, 368.

<sup>90</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> September 1864, 'Reply to Loyal Colored People of Baltimore upon Presentation of a Bible.' *Ibid.*, 542.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Madison C. Peters, *Abraham Lincoln's Religion* (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1909), 8.

<sup>95</sup> Morel, *Lincoln's Sacred Effort*, 97-98.

<sup>96</sup> Oscar T. Corson, *Abraham Lincoln: His Words and Deeds* (Dansville: F.A. Owen Publishing Company, 1927), 45-46.

following assertion, “That the President read the Bible goes without saying.”<sup>97</sup> Lincoln’s Language is unequivocal and it is therefore reasonable to take him at his word, although Jayne is not convinced. He presents the suggestion that Lincoln’s stated views on the Bible were not to be taken at face value. He raises the point that Lincoln knew that the words of Jesus had been twisted to suit the Confederate proslavery ideology, and as a lawyer Lincoln himself was acquainted with the attorney skill of manipulating information in support of their clients’ interests.<sup>98</sup> There can be little doubt of the validity of Jayne’s assertion regarding the skills of lawyers; however, to accept his argument requires the reader to accept that Lincoln actually believed the almost opposite of what he said. In this instance it is reasonable to accept that Lincoln believed at least most of what he declared.

It is inconceivable that Lincoln would have received this presentation with no note of thanks in which the nature of the gift was extolled. However, he could have easily commented on the handsome binding or appearance of the volume, or offered a general platitude. Lincoln instead offered a glowing comment on the superlative nature of the Bible. This incident appears to offer a window into Lincoln’s consideration of the Bible.

It may be of interest to note that Lincoln’s last public address was delivered three days before his death.<sup>99</sup> The Address, which was 1,820 words in length, came in response to the evacuation of Richmond and Petersburg and surrender of Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia.<sup>100</sup> Lincoln could not have appreciated that this would be his final speech, and its significance is derived from the events that would unfold at Ford’s Theatre. Lincoln did begin the Address with a gentle reference to the place of the will and sovereignty of God in the progress of the War, “In the midst of this, however, He, from whom all blessings flow, must not be forgotten. A call for national thanksgiving is being prepared, and will be duly promulgated.”<sup>101</sup> During 1864 and 1865, the majority of Lincoln’s use of the Bible occurred in his considerable treatment of the will of God, and his Second Inaugural Address. Lincoln’s multiple considerations of the will of God will be examined in the next section of this thesis, while most of the following chapter will be devoted to the Inaugural Address.

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<sup>97</sup> Merrill D. Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 1994), 226.

<sup>98</sup> Jayne, *American Manifesto*, Location 1617.

<sup>99</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> April 1865, ‘Last Public Address.’ Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8. 399-405.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 399.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 399-400.

## 6.5. Lincoln's treatment of the will of God

During the progress of this research, the way in which the Bible influenced Lincoln's writing and speeches is examined in the chronological order in which each piece appears in the CW. There are a number of occasions when Lincoln reflected or commented upon issues related to the will of God during the progress of the War. These took the form of letters, responses to gatherings, and proclamations, the culmination of which will be seen in his Second Inaugural Address.<sup>102</sup> The Bible's influence on Lincoln's understanding of the Divine will appears a number of times during the War, and for the purpose of clarity these will be examined in categories which relate to the subject at hand.

### 6.5.1. Meditation on the Divine will

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1862 Lincoln stole a private moment to consider the tumultuous events unfolding before him. He did what he often did: he expressed his thoughts on paper<sup>103</sup> and composed what Hay<sup>104</sup> would refer to as the Meditation on the Divine will.<sup>105</sup> It is interesting to note that during what Marvel described as *Lincoln's Darkest Year*,<sup>106</sup> Lincoln composed this concise and yet profound<sup>107</sup> reflection upon the will of God for the nation.<sup>108</sup>

This Meditation was not written for publication or for public address. According to Hay and Nicolay, Lincoln was wrestling on paper with his thoughts and was "absolutely detached from any earthly considerations ... it was not written to be seen of men. It was penned in the awful sincerity of a perfectly honest soul trying to bring itself into closer communion with its Maker."<sup>109</sup> Hay and Nicolay did not believe that this was not the cynical production of a politically aware and astute President, trying to appease or please a constituency. Lincoln was simply meditating

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<sup>102</sup> Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006) Kindle edition, Location 1182.

<sup>103</sup> White states the widely held opinion that Lincoln used paper and pencil to work out his thinking. Ronald C. White, lecture delivered at the Huntington Library Art Collection, accessed 29<sup>th</sup> April 2009. [www.apple.com/uk/education/itunes-u](http://www.apple.com/uk/education/itunes-u)

<sup>104</sup> White, *Lincoln*, Location 10924.

<sup>105</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 403-404.

<sup>106</sup> Marvel, *Lincoln's Darkest Year*.

<sup>107</sup> Michael Burlingame, *Lincoln and the Civil War* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2011), 126.

<sup>108</sup> Meditation on the Divine Will, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1862; Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 403-404.

<sup>109</sup> John G. Nicolay and John Hay, "Lincoln and the Churches," in Barton, *Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, Appendix viii, 384.



on the greater meaning of what was, at the time of composition, becoming the most exorbitant of American wars, a war the North was far from winning.

Lincoln was indeed given to reasoning on paper; his reflection on Niagara Falls is a case in point.<sup>110</sup> Goodwin records that Lincoln often expressed anger in a letter that he would never send, an example of Lincoln working out his thought and feelings on paper for purely private reasons.<sup>111</sup> It furnishes a vital piece of evidence for understanding the place of the Bible in Lincoln's political career, as White asserts that it "becomes a primary resource in answering the question of the integrity of Lincoln's ideas in the Second Inaugural."<sup>112</sup>

#### **6.5.1.1. The Place of the Bible in the Meditation**

In order to explain adequately the Bible's influence upon Lincoln's thinking, in this instance a complete quotation is required:

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 adaptation to effect His purpose. I am almost ready to say this is probably true---that God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet. By his mere 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.<sup>113</sup>

This thesis has sought to explain that Lincoln's religious experience was centred on his avid youthful reading of the Bible, which became a feature of his life during the Springfield and Presidential years. His parent's Indiana frontier Baptist church, as well as the preaching of the Rev Smith in Springfield, provided the theological context for Lincoln's engagement with the Bible. In terms of the question of whether

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<sup>110</sup> Fragment- Niagara Falls, 25-30<sup>th</sup> September 1848. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 10-11.

<sup>111</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 535-536.

<sup>112</sup> Temple, *From Skeptic*, 79; White, *Lincoln's Greatest Speech*, 126-127.

<sup>113</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 403-404.

Lincoln read hermeneutics or exegetical works, Robert Bray has furnished an invaluable tool. He lists a complete bibliography of all the books that Lincoln owned or was likely to have read.<sup>114</sup> Bray's work is of such importance that it will be revisited in this section, but at this juncture it is important to note that Lincoln did not own or read any religious books. The only exceptions were the Bible and Cruden's Concordance. It is important to state that the views expressed in Lincoln's Meditation are no doubt partly due to the wider Christian culture in which he matured, and conducted his family life. However this thesis contends that his personal reading and evaluation of the Bible inspired the majority of Lincoln's thinking on the matter of the will of God. This is also the majority view of historians who have considered this Meditation. The views of scholars will be reflected at a later stage of this section. Lincoln does not offer quotations or paraphrases in this Meditation. Indeed it is reasonable to argue that it is the themes, rather than the language of the Bible, that Lincoln evokes. The indirect nature of Lincoln's writing leads to the conclusion that the main components of this piece provides an echo of the teaching of the Bible.

The starting point for Lincoln's reflection on the Divine will is the issue of the sovereignty of God that his will shall be accomplished. Lincoln continued with a personal acknowledgement that it is possible to be mistaken about the details of God's will; moreover, his understanding of history was that in previous wars both sides thought they were in the right.<sup>115</sup> Lincoln conceded that it was conceivable that in this War both sides might be wrong.<sup>116</sup>

Lincoln then introduced a thought that characterized his understanding of the application of the Divine will. Lincoln stated his belief that God used human agencies despite their frailties. He stated his conjecture that God considered these human agencies as "the best adaptation to affect his purpose."<sup>117</sup> The concept of God being willing to use people to accomplish his will was extremely important to Lincoln. It has already been noted that he sought to be a humble instrument in God's hands.<sup>118</sup> It is feasible to suggest that Lincoln's reading of the Bible would have taught him that

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<sup>114</sup> Robert C. Bray, "What Abraham Lincoln Read: An Evaluation and Annotated List," *The Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 28, no. 2 (2007): 28-81.

<sup>115</sup> "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." Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 403.

<sup>116</sup> "In the present civil war it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party." *Ibid.*, 404.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 403.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 4. 236.

the will of God was not always obvious or even similar to human logic. Isaiah 55:8-9 states:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts neither are your ways my ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Lincoln considered that the will of God was not a nebulous or unidentifiable concept but involved a tangible plan that could affect the most practical or even political situations. In this Meditation, and in his Presidential writings and speeches generally, it becomes clear that Lincoln was devoted to these two components, which he considered essential for the execution of God's will:

1. Comprehension of God's Will;
2. Human devotion and effort and the will of God.

In this Meditation Lincoln presented this thinking thus, "human instrumentalities, working as they do, are the best adaptation to effect His purpose."<sup>119</sup> Indeed there are many occasions in which the will of God was established through human agencies, even those agencies that were evil or unlikely vessels of righteous action. The comprehension and the employment of human agency will be more fully considered in the following section of this thesis.

The concept of the will of God having a direct effect upon the War had occupied Lincoln to the extent that he felt the need to clarify his thinking on paper. The War was in its seventeenth month, and Lincoln had arrived at the conclusion that this conflict was part of God's will for the nation, and not simply the War itself, though God was not going to allow the War to end before his will was accomplished.<sup>120</sup> Lincoln concluded his Meditation with the aspect of his dilemma that most troubled him, namely that God "could give the final victory to either side any day. Yet the contest proceeds."<sup>121</sup> Lincoln's understanding was that God not only controlled the cause and outcome of the War, but he also held the key to its duration.

Lincoln's Meditation was not simply the fruit of pontificating; Again the contention of this thesis is that Lincoln's reading of the Bible had been a significant contributory factor in informing his thinking. There are occasions in which the Bible

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 404.

<sup>120</sup> "I am almost ready to say this is probably true --- that God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet." Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 404.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

records the condescension of God, who chooses to act in the confines of time and space. In creation God established divisions of time,<sup>122</sup> and in the implementation of the covenant with Abraham God's promise was constructed around a specific time frame, "But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year" (Genesis 17:22). There are a number of other occasions in which God's will is defined by the parameters of time and space.<sup>123</sup> Lincoln appears to have understood the sovereignty of God's timing. He appreciated that while the whole nation hoped and probably prayed for a speedy conclusion to the War, God is not hurried by the extent of time, which may appear prolonged from a human perspective. Again, Lincoln offered the diagnosis of a person whose mind had been immersed in the contents of the Bible; the idea that a Deist or a fatalist would believe that the Divine being was intervening in human affairs to the extent of controlling the length of a war would surely be unthinkable.

Writing about this Meditation Deboice said, "In the days of his own Gethsemane this driven soul, left to us, what was written for his own eyes alone to see. It is an honest effort to rationalise the Civil War."<sup>124</sup> Rable submits that in his Meditation Lincoln offered "a far more thoughtful reflection on God's purposes than did the most learned clergy on either side of the conflict."<sup>125</sup> The Meditation also demonstrates the erudite nature of Lincoln's handling of the Bible; Carwardine considers that it "reflects the growing profundity of the President's personal theology,"<sup>126</sup> while White believed that "Forced by the war to think more deeply, Lincoln emerged broader than his contemporaries in discerning the ways of God."<sup>127</sup> Noll correctly assessed that Lincoln's thinking revealed in this Meditation was "typical of Lincoln's Presidential years."<sup>128</sup> This private reflection of Lincoln's is an invaluable window into the thinking of the President during the War, and also demonstrates that the Bible had not only influenced him on ideas of belief but also his

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<sup>122</sup> "And God said let there be lights in the firmament of the Heaven to divide the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years." Genesis 1:14.

<sup>123</sup> The structure of Jewish Feasts was rooted in their timing. Exodus 24:14; In Daniel 9 there is an apocalyptic vision, which is built around the issue of divisions of time. The mercies of the Lord are said to be "new every morning; great is thy faithfulness." Lamentations 3:23. Indeed the term "Day of the Lord" is both an Old and New Testament designation for a day of judgment upon the Earth, 2 Peter 3:12.

<sup>124</sup> B.S. Deboice, *The Spiritual Life of Abraham Lincoln*. Unpublished manuscript 1940, Lincoln Collection article written in 1940 ALPL, 3.

<sup>125</sup> Rable, *God's Almost Chosen People*, 370.

<sup>126</sup> Carwardine, *Purpose and Power*, Location 4664.

<sup>127</sup> White, *Lincoln*, Location 10896.

<sup>128</sup> Noll, *The Civil War*, Location 1182.

political and military thinking. Lincoln's reflection upon the current crisis through the prism of his understanding of the Bible is reflective of what Thiselton articulates,

Hermeneutics does not encourage the production of tight, brittle, fully formed systems of thought that are 'closed' against modification or further development. The horizons of interpretation in hermeneutical inquiry are always moving and expanding.<sup>129</sup>

In this instance Lincoln brought the dilemma of the War to his private devotional thinking. He applied his religious experience, in the most part his reading of the Bible, to the issue and provided an example of 'expanding' his horizon of interpretation to fit the catastrophe of the War. There is a case for stating that this concise meditation displayed Lincoln's rather adroit navigation through the Bible's guidance on the will of God. The ability to apply the ancient thoughts of God's guidance and the discerning of his will is not an inconsiderable achievement. Virkler submits "All too often movement from historical meaning to modern-day application is assumed to be straightforward and self-evident."<sup>130</sup>

### **6.5.2. The will of God**

The first aspect of Lincoln's understanding of God's will was the essentiality and possibility of comprehension. It will be demonstrated that in contrast to other ideologies, the Bible teaches that God's will is both accessible and indispensable to mankind. This underpinned Lincoln's comments throughout this Presidency. The simple fact was that Lincoln considered that he needed to understand something of the will of God for the nation in order to prosecute successfully the War.

#### **6.5.2.1. The importance of the Divine will to Lincoln**

In a Proclamation<sup>131</sup> dated October 1864, Lincoln called for

a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to Almighty God the beneficent Creator and Ruler of the Universe. And I do farther recommend to my fellow-citizens aforesaid that on that occasion they do reverently humble

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<sup>129</sup> Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 15.

<sup>130</sup> Henry A. Virkler, and Karelyne Gerber Ayayo. *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation, Second Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 194.

<sup>131</sup> Proclamation of Thanksgiving, 20<sup>th</sup> October 1864; Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8. 55-56.

themselves ... offer up penitent and fervent prayers and supplications to the Great Disposer of events.<sup>132</sup>

It has already been stated that as Lincoln approached the Presidency, his intention was to be an instrument useful to the Divine purpose.<sup>133</sup> In 1862 Lincoln issued an instruction for military Sabbath Observation, in which he listed one of his reasons for so doing as “a due regard for the Divine will.”<sup>134</sup> In July 1863 Lincoln pronounced a national day of thanksgiving,<sup>135</sup> in which he spoke about the need for “submission to the Divine Will.”<sup>136</sup> The end of 1862 brought a letter from a representation of Quakers in Iowa assuring Lincoln of their agreement and prayers.<sup>137</sup> Lincoln’s grateful and immediate response<sup>138</sup> contained his continued awareness of the essentiality of Divine assistance, as expressed in his Farewell Address.<sup>139</sup> Although Lincoln was never overtly self-assured in the matter of his comprehension of the will of God, he was quietly confident that the administration’s attempts to preserve the Union, could be considered as consistent with the will of God. He stated, “I am conscious of no desire for my country’s welfare, that is not in consonance with His will, and of no plan upon which we may not ask his blessing.”<sup>140</sup>

In his Response to Evangelical Lutherans,<sup>141</sup> Lincoln spoke of the possibility of the will of God to preserve the Union, stating that the correct reaction would be, “humbly seeking the Divine Guidance, make their prolonged national existence a source of new benefits to themselves and their successors.”<sup>142</sup> In terms of comprehension there is a most interesting account of Lincoln’s response to a cross-denominational delegation that sought to persuade Lincoln of the will of God for emancipation.<sup>143</sup> It is almost possible to sense the frustration that Lincoln had with the

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>133</sup> This has been discussed in Section 5.3.2.8 of this thesis.

<sup>134</sup> Order For Sabbath Observation, 15<sup>th</sup> November 1862. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 497.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., Vol.6. 332.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> According to Basler Lincoln received a letter “On behalf of the Religious Society of Friends in the State of Iowa.” The letter was dated 27<sup>th</sup> December 1862. The letter was signed by Caleb Russell and Sallie A. Fenton. Ibid., 40, Footnote 1.

<sup>138</sup> “The Honorable Senator Harlan has just placed in my hand your letter ... which I have read with pleasure and gratitude.” Letter to Russell and Fenton, 5<sup>th</sup> January 1863. Ibid., 40.

<sup>139</sup> Lincoln’s 1861 Farewell Address at Springfield, Illinois has been examined with special attention to Lincoln’s reliance on the concept of Divine assistance. Section 4.5.1.2 of this thesis.

<sup>140</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6. 39-40.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., Vol. 5. 419-420.

<sup>142</sup> 13<sup>th</sup> May 1862; Ibid., 213.

<sup>143</sup> Reply to Emancipation Memorial Presented by Chicago Christians of All Denominations, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1862. Ibid., 419-425.

rigidity and small-mindedness of certain members of established Christian denominations. Charnwood suggested these were the words of a “strained and slightly irritated man.”<sup>144</sup> Lincoln spoke of the fact that he was often attended by opposing sides of an argument, both of which claimed the will of God, and indeed was engaged in a sectional war in which both sides claimed to be acting according to the will of God. To illustrate his frustration he responded thus:

I am sure that either the one or the other class is mistaken in that belief, and perhaps in some respects both. I hope that 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.* ... and I suppose it will be granted that I am not to expect a direct revelation.<sup>145</sup>

Lincoln not only understood the need of comprehension; he saw it as a matter of responsibility not to cave in to pressure and allow himself to be lobbied on the issue of comprehension.

In his Proclamation on Prayer,<sup>146</sup> Lincoln also spoke of the danger of the Republic being destroyed by a failure to comprehend, or even deliberate ignorance of the guidance of God. He encouraged the nation to pray that they might not be destroyed “by obstinate adhesion to our own counsels, which may be in conflict with His eternal purposes, and to implore Him to enlighten the mind of the Nation to know and do His will.”<sup>147</sup> Lincoln echoes concern regarding this potential condition of the heart that is not open to God:

To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Temple, *From Skeptic*, 133; Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, 323.

<sup>145</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 419-420.

<sup>146</sup> Proclamation of a Day of Prayer, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1864. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7. 431-432.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 431.

<sup>148</sup> Proclamation of Thanksgiving, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1863. *Ibid.*, 496.

Lincoln's discussion of what he ascribes "obstinate adhesion," is thematically redolent of the biblical phrase "hardness of heart." Jesus spoke of the Jewish people as being unable to receive the fullness of truth from Moses "because of the hardness of your hearts" (Matthew 19:8). This attitude in the Pharisees produced a strong reaction from Jesus, "And when he had looked round on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts" (Mark 3:5). Lincoln will have been familiar with this concept from both his ecclesiastical experience and his reading of the Bible. It is suggested that this is an example of a possible biblical echo, which is indicative of Lincoln's awareness of the possibility of 'hardness of heart' as an obstruction to understanding and obeying the will of God.

In late 1863 Lincoln expressed his simple personal reflection upon God's sovereignty:

Nevertheless, amid the greatest difficulties of my administration, when I could not see any other resort, I would place my whole reliance on God, knowing that all would go well, and that He would decide for the right.<sup>149</sup>

In the examination of Lincoln's use of the Bible it can sometimes be seen that he understood that God's intervention was visible in the practical political matters of the day. Lincoln believed that democracy should not be hindered even by the War. He acknowledged the generosity and trust of the American people who returned him for a second Presidential term of office: "While I am deeply sensible to the high compliment of a re-election; and duly grateful, as I trust, to Almighty God for having directed my countrymen to a right conclusion."<sup>150</sup> On this subject Morel observed that, "The idea of constitutional self government under the beneficence of God stands as a running theme for Lincoln."<sup>151</sup> Lincoln appeared to align himself with the Bible's teaching that God ultimately appoints governments, even democratically elected ones.

In the text of an address written in April 1864 Lincoln made this remark, "So true it is that man proposes, and God disposes."<sup>152</sup> This in many ways summarizes the supreme importance that Lincoln placed on comprehension of God's will. Without this, the most noble and expert of endeavour would be futile. Lincoln lifts this quotation from the celebrated fifteenth-century work of Thomas à Kempis who declared, "For man proposes, but God disposes; neither is the way of man in

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., *Vol. 6*. 536.

<sup>150</sup> Response to a Serenade, 10<sup>th</sup> November 1864. Ibid., *Vol. 8*. 101.

<sup>151</sup> Morel, *Lincoln's Sacred Effort*, 59.

<sup>152</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, *Vol. 7*. 301.



himself.”<sup>153</sup> It is unlikely that Lincoln was intimately acquainted with Kempis,<sup>154</sup> but the quote was well known and provided a pithy expression for some important biblical statements, “A man’s heart diviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps” (Proverbs 16:9). There are more citations which could be offered, for example Proverbs 19:21 and Jeremiah 10:23.

### **6.5.2.2. The Bible’s influence on Lincoln’s thinking**

Kostenberger states, “All scripture is rooted in real-life history. God revealed himself in history, and the genres and language in which God chose to reveal himself reflects the historical context.”<sup>155</sup> There are numerous occasions when God revealed, or promised to reveal his will. It would appear from the Bible that God would use almost any vessel to reveal his will to any person, “In all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:6). Joseph was guided by dreams that saved thousands of lives and affected the destiny of several nations, according to Genesis 37-40. The Apostle Paul received guidance as to where he should be (Acts 10:19-20). The theme of God’s guidance is so prolific in the Bible that an extended discourse is unnecessary. Lincoln was so well acquainted with the Bible that these thoughts formed a significant contribution to his thinking during this period of National Crisis. Lincoln did not appear to expect dramatic Divine visitations,<sup>156</sup> but he did expect that through his best efforts, and God’s grace in bestowing wisdom, he would know and act in accordance with the will of God.

### **6.5.2.3. Light and the Divine will**

The Bible employs the metaphor of Light for the will of God. For example, “O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me” (Psalm 43:3); while Psalm 119:105 declares, “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” When the

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<sup>153</sup> "homo proponit, sed deus disponit," Thomas A' Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ* (London: James Finch and Co. Ltd, 1901), 33.

<sup>154</sup> Bray evaluates a likely list of literary works with which Lincoln may have been acquainted with, but Thomas à Kempis not mentioned as a source Lincoln employed. Robert C. Bray, "What Abraham Lincoln Read - An Evaluation And Annotated List," *The Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 28, no. 2 (2007): 28-81.

<sup>155</sup> Andreas J. Kostenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011), 27.

<sup>156</sup> "I suppose it will be granted that I am not to expect a direct revelation." From Lincoln's Reply to Emancipation Memorial Presented by Chicago Christians of All Denominations, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1862. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 419-420.

father of John the Baptist regained his speech he prophesied of his son's destiny, "To give light to them that sit in darkness ... to guard our feet in the way of peace," (Luke 1:79). "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth" (John 12:35). The idea of God granting light as a symbol of guidance is a certainly biblical theme.<sup>157</sup> The idea of light guiding a person's life or path was undoubtedly part of normal language and thought in the Antebellum, and Lincoln's use of the term alone is not a conclusive representation of his reliance upon the Bible. However this wider context of Lincoln's wartime reflections suggest the distinct possibility that the Bible's words on light were part of the influence, which guided Lincoln's language in two utterances on the will of God.

In an 1862 letter, Lincoln considered that he was a partaker in the Divine will, "being a humble instrument in the hands of our heavenly father, as I am, and as we all are, to work out his great purposes."<sup>158</sup> He continued thus:

I have desired that all my works and acts may be according to his will, and that it might be so. I have sought his aid – but after endeavoring to do my best in the light which he affords me, I find my efforts fail, I must believe that for some purpose unknown to me, He wills it otherwise.<sup>159</sup>

Lincoln later composed another letter to Eliza Gurney,<sup>160</sup> in which he spoke about the mysteries of God's will. This letter contains such relevance to the Second Inaugural Address that it will be examined in the next chapter of this thesis. Four months earlier Lincoln answered a 'Delegation of Progressive Friends' and spoke of God's guidance thus, "with a firm reliance upon the divine arm, and seeking light from above, to do his duty in the place to which he had been called."<sup>161</sup> It is interesting to note that Lincoln had already in this answer expressed the thought that he might be "an instrument in God's hands of accomplishing a great work."<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> The following is a sampling of verse in which the Bible equates the giving of light as guidance in the Divine Will: Psalm 89:15; 119:130; Isaiah 42:16; John 8:12; John 12:46; Romans 2:19.

<sup>158</sup> Reply to Eliza P. Gurney, 26<sup>th</sup> October 1862; Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 478.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> To Eliza P. Gurney, 4<sup>th</sup> September 1864. Ibid., Vol. 7. 535.

<sup>161</sup> Remark to a Delegation of Progressive Friends, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1862. Ibid., Vol. 5. 279.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

#### **6.5.2.4. God's will and The War**

Lincoln's Meditation was provoked by his attempts to understand fully the will of God. Lincoln considered that he needed to understand the Divine Will in relation to the conflict he was seeking to navigate through. Lincoln made a number of statements regarding five aspects of the will of God as it related to the War.

##### **6.5.2.4.1. God's will in the control of the War**

The Bible's teaching on the sovereignty of the Divine will was a pervading theme for Lincoln, and most especially in his understanding that God and not armies or politicians had the final say in the matter of the War.

In an 1862 "Proclamation of Thanksgiving," Lincoln reflected upon certain military victories. He considered these to be in the overall context of the will of God, "It has pleased Almighty God to vouchsafe signal victories to the land and naval forces ... at the same time to avert from our country the dangers of foreign intervention and invasion."<sup>163</sup> The following month Lincoln offered a "Response to Evangelical Lutherans," in which he spoke of God's will. He expressed his belief that only the will of God would be established as a result of the War "if it shall please the Divine Being who determines the destinies of nations that this shall remain a united people."<sup>164</sup> It is interesting to note that in this episode Lincoln spoke of the government's appeal to the population to be wholly "dependent upon the favor of God."<sup>165</sup> One year later he issued another Proclamation in which he invoked the nation to,

fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as many be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of ... Union.<sup>166</sup>

Lincoln's 1864 call for a Day of Prayer also contained evidence of his appreciation of the sovereignty of God. He suggested that part of the theme for prayer should be to "implore Him as the Supreme Ruler of the World, not to destroy us, as a people, nor suffer us to be destroyed by the hostility or connivance of other Nations."<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Proclamation of Thanksgiving for Victories, 10<sup>th</sup> April 1862. *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>164</sup> 13<sup>th</sup> May 1862. *Ibid.*, 212-213.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>166</sup> Proclamation of Thanksgiving, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1863. *Ibid.*, *Vol. 6.* 497.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, *Vol. 7.* 431.

Lincoln issued an Order of Thanks to General W.T. Sherman and his staff on the capture of Atlanta.<sup>168</sup> It has been stated that Lincoln considered the will of God to be directly applicable to the details of human and even political affairs. In this quotation Lincoln actually attributes the success of Sherman's operation to the fact that it was part of God's plan for the execution of the War. He proceeded to congratulate Sherman and declare that "Divine favor, has resulted in the capture of the City of Atlanta."<sup>169</sup>

Following the Union triumph at Gettysburg, Lincoln issued a Proclamation for National Thanksgiving.<sup>170</sup> In this document Lincoln touched upon a number of issues connected to this section of the thesis. He encouraged the people not simply to give thanks, but to pray that God would actually change the hearts of the Confederates, "invoke the influence of His Holy Spirit to subdue the anger, which has produced, and so long sustained a needless and cruel rebellion, to change the hearts of the insurgents."<sup>171</sup> Lincoln stated a similar thought in a later proclamation, in which he spoke of this aspect of God's will that can change the hearts of the enemy. Lincoln urged the people in their prayers to

Implore Him in His infinite goodness to soften the hearts, enlighten the minds, and quicken the consciences of those in rebellion, that they may lay down their arms and speedily return to their allegiance to the United States.<sup>172</sup>

In this passage there is a unique reference to the Holy Spirit in the guidance of nations.

The previously examined claims that Lincoln did not use biblical designations for God,<sup>173</sup> and that he was simply using religious language to appease the religious electorate,<sup>174</sup> are deeply flawed in the light of this unique Presidential invocation. Proverbs 21:1 states, "The Kings heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it withersoever he will." The Bible contains instances in which God has moved upon the hearts of an enemy to fulfil the Divine will. God spoke through Isaiah to describe the way in which a pagan king who did not know Yahweh was still

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<sup>168</sup> Order of Thanks to William T. Sherman and Others, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1864. *Ibid.*, 533.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> A Proclamation of Thanksgiving, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1863. *Ibid.*, *Vol. 6.* 332.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, *Vol. 7.* 431.

<sup>173</sup> This is briefly examined in Section 5.2.2 of this thesis.

<sup>174</sup> This claim has already been touched upon, but a fuller consideration will be offered in Section 7.8 of this thesis.

useful in the Divine will, “Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, who’s right hand I have holden, to subdue the nations before him” (Isaiah 45:1). The issue is given context by the remark in Isaiah 45:4, “For Jacob my servant’s sake, and Israel mine elect, I have called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.” Lincoln most possibly would have learned these principles from his extensive reading of scripture. There is case for considering Lincoln’s reflections and remarks as echoes of the Bible’s statements on the will of God. Benjamin Sommer submits that a Biblical echo enhances a text with a shared idea, which is not necessarily recognisable because of shared language.<sup>175</sup> Lincoln’s words can be argued to have shared concepts with some of the biblical material here quoted. He makes the point that on occasions the recognition of an echo reveals something about the author.<sup>176</sup> In this instance attention to Lincoln’s treatment of the will of God reveals the thoughtful way in which he sought to understand the larger issues of the destiny of the War.

#### **6.5.2.4.2. God’s will and the War’s duration**

In his Meditation Lincoln agonized<sup>177</sup> over the fact that not only was the War potentially the will of God, so was its extended duration. He did not claim any untypical wisdom or prophetic anointing; he declared that in the light of the fact that

it (the war) still continues ...we must believe that He permits it for some wise purpose of his own, mysterious and unknown to us; and though with our limited understandings we may not be able to comprehend it, yet we cannot but believe, that he who made the world still governs it.<sup>178</sup>

The necessary humility of even a President in comparison with the Divine intellect is, again, a biblical concept, “For as the heavens are high above the earth than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9). Again, Lincoln’s thinking is at least consistent with the influence of the Bible. The conclusion to Lincoln’s comments contain his thought that God is sovereign creator, a position entirely consistent with the teaching of the Bible; examples of such are Genesis 1-3, Psalms 8, 46, and 47. The words of Psalm 46:10 are particularly

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<sup>175</sup> Benjamin B. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40-66* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 15

<sup>176</sup> Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture* 17

<sup>177</sup> “The President had long tried to understand why the Almighty had allowed the war to begin and why he had allowed it to continue for so long.” Burlingame, *Lincoln and the Civil War*, 126.

<sup>178</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 478.

poignant in the light of Lincoln's contention that the duration of the War was a matter of God's will, "He maketh wars to cease in all the earth; he breatheth the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire."

The issue of the will of God featured heavily in the 1864 Proclamation.<sup>179</sup> Lincoln called for the nation to pray "that if consistent with his will, the existing rebellion may be speedily suppressed,"<sup>180</sup> although the issue here is not necessarily whether the suppression of the rebellion was the will of God, but whether "speedy suppression"<sup>181</sup> was in the Divine intention. Lincoln also stated that he believed that the restoration and prosperity of the Union was the will of God, "humbly believing that in accordance with His will that our place should be maintained as a united people among the family of nations."<sup>182</sup> The issue was speed, as he would state in his Second Inaugural Address. God would allow the War to continue for as long as it took, in order to complete his purposes for the nation.<sup>183</sup>

#### **6.5.2.4.3. God's will and gratitude**

Lincoln considered that the most powerful force at work in the destiny of the United States was the will of God, and as such when military victories were realized he called for thanksgiving to the God who had willed the success. When Lincoln publically announced the victory by the Union forces at Gettysburg, he chose to declare gratitude to God with an affirmation of the need to pursue his will, "And that for this, he especially desires that on this day, He whose will, not ours, should ever be done, be everywhere remembered and revered with profoundest gratitude."<sup>184</sup>

This aspect of thankfulness for God's will was also expressed in response to the serenade of a crowd who were celebrating Grant's victory in the Battle of the Wilderness. Lincoln said, "While we are grateful to all the brave men and officers for the events of the past few days, we should, above all, be very grateful to Almighty God, who gives us the victory."<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Proclamation of a Day of Prayer, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1864. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7. 431.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> This thought will be examined in the treatment of the Second Inaugural Address, Section 7.1 of this thesis.

<sup>184</sup> Lincoln's Announcement of News From Gettysburg, 10.00am 4<sup>th</sup> July 1863. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6. 314.

<sup>185</sup> Response To Serenade, 9<sup>th</sup> May 1864. Ibid., Vol.7. 334.

#### 6.5.2.4.4. God's will and human endeavour

It was stated in the treatment of Lincoln's Meditation that he believed that the will of God could be comprehended, and that human devotion and effort was a part of the establishment of the purposes of God. There are a number of occasions in which Lincoln expressed this thought in connection to the War.

In a sizeable letter to Cockling, Lincoln concluded thus, "Let us diligently apply the means, never doubting that a just God, in his own good time, will give us the rightful result."<sup>186</sup> The combination for Lincoln is essential, namely diligence and the timing of a just God. To the nation Lincoln asked "they reverently invoke the Divine Guidance for our national counsels, to the end that they may speedily result in the restoration of peace."<sup>187</sup> Lincoln here connected Divine guidance with the efforts of the government, as vital components for victory.

In September 1864, Lincoln issued a Proclamation in honour of a number of military successes.<sup>188</sup> This has already been mentioned, but it also provides an illustration of the issue at hand. Lincoln stated that God should be thanked because the victories were ultimately part of his will, and yet this was also the result of military efforts:

The signal success that Divine Providence has recently has recently vouchsafed to the operations of the United States fleet and army in the harbor of Mobile and the reduction of Fort-Powell, Fort-Gaines, and Fort-Morgan, and the glorious achievements of Major General Sherman ... resulting in the capture of the City of Atlanta, call for devout acknowledgement to the Supreme Being in whose hands are the destinies of nations.<sup>189</sup>

He continued by asking the nation to pray "for the Divine protection to our brave soldiers and their leaders in the field, who have so often and so gallantly periled their lives in battling with the enemy."<sup>190</sup> In acknowledging the supremacy of the Divine will, Lincoln also spoke of the excellent efforts of the branches of the Union forces. This is the principle by which Lincoln understood the operation of God's will in the destiny of the Nation: Divine guidance and favour coupled with human effort and

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<sup>186</sup> To J.C. Cockling, 26<sup>th</sup> August 1863. *Ibid.*, Vol. 6. 410.

<sup>187</sup> Proclamation of Thanksgiving for Victories, 10<sup>th</sup> April 1862. *Ibid.*, Vol. 5. 185.

<sup>188</sup> Proclamation of Thanksgiving and Prayer, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1864. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7. 533-534.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 533.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

expertise. This again is a concept drawn from the Bible. One component without the other was a problem; human effort external to the will of God was ultimately futile, while attention to the Divine will devoid of agreeable participants would be a problem. From the youthful years in his father's cabin to the legal practice in Springfield, it is strongly suggested that Lincoln's extensive reading of the Bible would have helped formulate his thinking, which he now declared to a nation in crisis. God's will achieved through their best efforts would win the War and preserve the Union.

The Bible teaches that God uses human agencies to achieve his will. For the purpose of this thesis a few examples are furnished to help reinforce the truth of the point being presented. In the Old Testament God applied the term "my servant" to individuals, which on selected occasions indicated their usefulness in the implementation of his plans. Abraham in Genesis 26:24; Moses in Numbers 12:7; Caleb in Numbers 14:24; David in 2 Samuel 3:18; and Isaiah in Isaiah 20:3 are all accordingly designated. It is also worth noting that the entire Jonah narrative demonstrated the lengths to which God was prepared literally to go in order to secure his choice of a human agent to declare his will. The call of the prophet also illustrates the point at hand, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:8).

Jesus's original call to, and intention for, the disciples was to equip them to do the will of God, "And he saith unto them, Follow me and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19); "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38). The harvest is God's will, and yet Jesus spoke of the essentiality of human effort in the establishment of this aspect of the will of his father. Toward the end of his earthly ministry Jesus addressed his disciples and stated, "I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12).

Indeed the theme of God executing his will through human agencies is a visible theme in the Bible, to the extent that the examples given are only a sampling of incidents and texts that could have been cited. Lincoln had formative periods of his life in which he was a thorough and regular reader of the Bible. This would appear to have been a significant contributory influence upon his thinking regarding the will of God, which in turn influenced his thoughts towards the War. Lincoln's thoughts on



the will of God and the War were shared both privately and in the most public arenas then open to the President.

#### **6.5.2.4.5. God's will and repentance**

Lincoln's understanding that God's will was enacted by human agencies contained another dimension. In order for humans to correctly understand and act upon the divine will, repentance was required. This was rather out of character with the mood of a nation at war, a war begun by the enemy for what was considered to be an unjust reason. It will be seen in the next chapter of this thesis that Lincoln's humility in the Second Inaugural Address was almost entirely opposite to some of the vitriol of other Northern luminaries. Lincoln actually called for the nation to repent and humble themselves before God.

In Lincoln's July 1863 "Proclamation of Thanksgiving," he spoke of God's guidance to "lead the whole nation, through the paths of repentance and submission to the Divine Will, back to the perfect enjoyment of Union and fraternal peace."<sup>191</sup> Here Lincoln clearly stated that repentance was the preparation for submission to the will of God. In Jeremiah's prophecy regarding the potter and the clay, God said, "If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them" (Jeremiah 18:8). There are numerous occasions in the Old Testament in which the people were encouraged to turn from their own ways and embrace God's will.<sup>192</sup> What is particularly striking, in terms of this thesis, is that these occurrences refer to a nation being called to repentance, and the will of God is for national prosperity.<sup>193</sup> Lincoln would have been familiar with the fact that in these incidents God dealt with or indeed offered to deal mercifully and lead repentant nations into the prosperity of his will.

This is not simply an intelligent man whimsically constructing his own philosophy on the ways of providence. This coupling of repentance and submission to God's will is convincingly reminiscent of instances in the Bible. In terms of personal restoration to the will of God, John the Baptist was "preaching in the wilderness of

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid. *Vol. 6*. 332.

<sup>192</sup> Examples of exhortation for the people to turn from their own ways in favour of God's are: Isaiah 59:20; Jeremiah 3:7; Ecclesiastes 3:19; Ezekiel 18:32; and Jonah 3:9.

<sup>193</sup> A particular example of the corporate nature of this is when Jeremiah reminded the nation of previous prophetic warning of repentance in order to enter the fullness of God's will, "turn ye again now everyone from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the Lord hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever." Jeremiah 25:25.

Judea, And Saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:1-2). The Gospel records the response of the people who “were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins” (Matthew 3:6). When Jesus began to preach, his message was also repentance which leads to restoration, “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). Rutledge offered a modern American theological perspective on Lincoln’s comments, stating that he “understood something about the need for collective repentance before the divine judgment.”<sup>194</sup> She was so impressed with the Biblical nature of his thinking that she added that Lincoln “was a theologian profound enough to stand alongside the giants of Christian history.”<sup>195</sup>

Peter’s Pentecost sermon concluded with the crowd asking, “brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). The Apostle answered, “Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). This message of repentance preceding restoration and blessing was the theme of the Early Church’s presentation of the Gospel.<sup>196</sup> In the book of Revelation, the ascended Jesus called five of the Seven Churches of Asia to repentance.<sup>197</sup> It is not an unreasonable proposal that this biblical connection between repentance and the Divine will may have influenced Lincoln’s statements during the War.

In Lincoln’s call for a national day of thanksgiving, there is further indication of the possible influence of the Bible upon his thinking. In giving thanks he again encouraged repentance “while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.”<sup>198</sup> The similarity in language and thought<sup>199</sup> between Lincoln and Habakkuk 3:2 suggests that he was employing an allusion to the prophet, “O’ Lord I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O’ Lord revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known, in wrath remembering mercy.” The contention of Gadamer that an allusion is the presentation of the essence of a text would appear a relevant description of Lincoln’s activity here. He continued the

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<sup>194</sup> Fleming Rutledge, *Not Ashamed of the Gospel: Sermons from Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 61.

<sup>195</sup> Rutledge, *Not Ashamed*, 61.

<sup>196</sup> The Early Church’s presentation of the Gospel was characterised by repentance leading to salvation: Acts 3:19; Acts 8:22; Acts 17:30; and Acts 26:20.

<sup>197</sup> Jesus commanded the following churches to repent, Ephesus (Revelation 2:5), Pergamos (Revelation 2:16), Thyatira (Revelation 2:22), Sardis (Revelation 3:3), Laodicea (Revelation 3:19). The churches of Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11) and Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13) had been faithful to the will of God and as such were not called to repentance.

<sup>198</sup> Proclamation of Thanksgiving, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1863. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6. 496-497.

<sup>199</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 147.

theme of repentance with the sentiment that the national attitude should be “humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience.”<sup>200</sup>

In July 1864 Lincoln issued a Proclamation. It is interesting that he described it as a call for “a day of humiliation and prayer by the people of the United States.”<sup>201</sup> Lincoln’s understanding of the will of God included this connection between the humility of repentance with prayer for God’s will to be done. This is reflected in this Proclamation “to confess and to repent of their manifold sins; that if consistent with his will, the existing rebellion may be specifically suppressed.”<sup>202</sup> In an 1863 Proclamation to announce a day of national fasting Lincoln declared:

And whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.<sup>203</sup>

Lincoln’s concluding words are almost identical to those of Psalm 33:12, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.” The similarity of language and theme suggest that Lincoln is furnishing a biblical paraphrase in this instance.

It would have been perfectly acceptable for Lincoln to issue a general proclamation about simply praying for God’s blessing and victory, but he appears to have allowed his Bible knowledge to shape his thinking on the will of God in the practical, and even political context of the nation embroiled in the Civil War. In terms of the possibility that Lincoln’s knowledge of the Bible helped formulate his thinking on the progress of the War, it is interesting to note the comments of James Dunn in agreement with Gadamer: “The interpreter and the act of interpretation are themselves caught up in the flow of history; both text and interpreter are part of a historical continuum.”<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6. 497.

<sup>201</sup> Proclamation of a Day of Prayer, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1864. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7. 431.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> Proclamation Appointing a National Fast Day, 30<sup>th</sup> March 1863. *Ibid.*, 155-156.

<sup>204</sup> James D.G. Dunn, “Biblical Hermeneutics and Historical Responsibility,” in *The Future of Biblical Interpretation: Responsible Plurality in Biblical Hermeneutics*, eds. Porter, Stanley E. and Matthew R. Malcolm (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2013) Kindle edition, Location 1145.

### 6.5.2.5. Scholars' reactions

Some scholars, inspired in the most part by Herndon,<sup>205</sup> have labelled Lincoln as something of a fatalist. Lincoln was certainly well aware of forces greater than the power of man, which affected the destiny of individuals and nations. However, this proclamation illustrates that, while Lincoln believed it was futile to argue against the will of God, he believed in the biblical teaching on the importance of good stewardship of human resources. Having expounded his thoughts on the will of God and the need for various actions of Divine intervention, Lincoln then directed the prayerful attention of the people thus, “implore Him to grant to our armed defenders and the masses of the people that courage; power of resistance and endurance necessary to secure that result.”<sup>206</sup> Geinapp reflected upon Lincoln’s beliefs as they were affected by the progress of the War. He submitted that the War had “deepened Lincoln’s sense of fatalism.”<sup>207</sup> He then proceeds to offer the following, “He had always believed in providence, a higher power that ordered human events, and often used the Word of God to describe this power.”<sup>208</sup> This assertion that Lincoln was something of a fatalist is an incomplete presentation of his understanding of the will of God. It offers no accommodation for what Lincoln declared about the importance and efficacious nature of human endeavour. Human effort in the context of the will of God would be futile if Lincoln really was a fatalist.

The Oxford definition of Fatalism states that it is “the doctrine that what will be will be, or that human action has no influence on events.”<sup>209</sup> When considering the Bible’s expansive teaching on the importance of human behaviour, and the Divine reaction toward both sin and righteous acts, fatalism can in no way be considered a Biblical ideology. Lincoln’s ideas on the will of God certainly embraced the Sovereignty of God, and he understood the potential futility of ill-conceived human activity, but there is no tangible trace of Fatalism in Lincoln’s treatment of the Divine will. If there was any fatalism in Lincoln’s thinking it certainly belongs to his distant past. White addresses this issue and suggests that states, his reflection actually,

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<sup>205</sup> Herndon’s views on Lincoln’s use of the Bible will be evaluated in Section 6.6 of this thesis.

<sup>206</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7. 431.

<sup>207</sup> William E. Gienapp, *Abraham Lincoln and Civil War America: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 19. It can also be noted that in his introduction to Lincolns’ ‘Meditation on Divine Will’ Gienapp also states his thought on Fatalism. Gienapp, *Fiery Trial*, Location 1880.

<sup>208</sup> Gienapp, *Lincoln and Civil War*, 19.

<sup>209</sup> Simon Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary Of Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 131.

“illuminates how far Lincoln had travelled on his journey from fatalism to providence.”<sup>210</sup>

In his examination of the books read by Lincoln, Robert Bray considers the possible influence of Thomas Paine upon Lincoln's treatment of the will of God. Bray addresses the work of Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason*, contending it contains an effective attack upon the naiveté of Christian belief.<sup>211</sup> Bray proceeds to make two important claims. Firstly, he asserts that Lincoln had read Paine's work. The proof that is offered is that Abner Y. Ellis told Herndon several times that Lincoln had read Paine. Ellis actually claimed that Lincoln had read Paine's *Common Sense*, which was a political work.<sup>212</sup> Bray then observes that Herndon made the assumption that Lincoln had also read *The Age of Reason* because his New Salem friends passed around the book during his youth. Bray quotes Herndon's next speculative assertion, namely that “Lincoln read both these books and thus assimilated them into his own being.”<sup>213</sup> It is difficult to state with certainty that Lincoln had not read *The Age of Reason*; it is however equally challenging to make definitive statements based on Herndon's speculation that the book was being passed around the village in which Lincoln lived.

Having asserted that Paine had influenced Lincoln, Bray then cites his response to the delegation of Christians<sup>214</sup> as well as the Meditation on the Divine Will.<sup>215</sup> Bray draws the conclusion that Lincoln did not think it was possible to know God's will and it was not his role even to pray for guidance, “he must think about it, not be blinded by revelatory light, not even pray, but simply, humanly think about problems like emancipation.”<sup>216</sup>

Bray then proceeds to discuss the ideology of Paine, which he considers influenced Lincoln's treatment of the Divine Will. Bray's twice stated contention is that Lincoln believed that it was impossible to know God and be guided by him.<sup>217</sup> He

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<sup>210</sup> White, *Lincoln*, Location10910.

<sup>211</sup> “*The Age of Reason* takes deadly aim at Christian credulity.” Robert C. Bray, *Reading with Lincoln* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), 69.

<sup>212</sup> *Common Sense* was a political work that “inspired the American Colonialists to action, turning a rebellion over taxation into a revolution for freedom.” Brian McCartin, *Thomas Paine: Common Sense and Revolutionary Pamphleteering* (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group Inc., 2002), 5.

<sup>213</sup> Bray, *Reading with Lincoln*, 69.

<sup>214</sup> Reply to Emancipation Memorial Presented by Chicago Christians of All Denominations, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1862. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 419-425.

<sup>215</sup> Meditation on the Divine Will, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1862. Ibid., 403-404.

<sup>216</sup> Bray, *Reading with Lincoln*, 71.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 72 and 74.

submits that Paine believed that “to know God was impossible,”<sup>218</sup> and thinking of Lincoln’s New Salem years Bray states, “This philosophical garment fits the young Lincoln perfectly.”<sup>219</sup> He then concedes that the language of other Lincoln Proclamations suggests engagement with the Bible, but dismisses this as Lincoln trying to say what a religious public wanted to hear in order to “satisfy even the most rigorous keepers of the Old Testament-like covenant.”<sup>220</sup>

Kaplan examined Lincoln’s treatment of God’s will submitting, “The Biblical resonance ... was a typical Lincoln touch ... deferring to clerical rhetoric while retaining his intellectual independence.”<sup>221</sup> He acknowledges that Lincoln had a thorough knowledge of the Bible,<sup>222</sup> but accepted the Herndon. Like Herndon, Kaplan contends that Lincoln was simply using the Bible because he thought it would help him accomplish his Presidential objectives, “As President, he was to have no objection to the rhetoric of Christianity as a vehicle to assist the nation’s redemption.”<sup>223</sup>

DiLorenzo expresses his view that Lincoln’s use of the Bible was not a true reflection of his personal thinking, “he was masterful at invoking religious rhetoric in his political speeches to audiences of believers.”<sup>224</sup> He makes the point that Lincoln’s personal beliefs are inconclusive, and builds upon this with the claim that Lincoln definitely was not a Christian.<sup>225</sup> In presenting his case DiLorenzo delivers his definitive conclusion without examining the sheer volume and intensity of the way in which Lincoln engaged with the Bible in some of his major speeches. He also chose not to address himself to the fact that the Meditation on the will of God was not composed for an audience. This raises the question as to why Lincoln would express such thoughts if the usual reason for doing so were to please his constituents.

In the light of the opinions of the aforementioned scholars it is important to note the fact no President, before or after Lincoln, felt the need to deliver such numerous Biblical pronouncements.<sup>226</sup> It has already been observed that Lincoln was

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Kaplan, *Biography of a Writer*, 339.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>224</sup> DiLorenzo, *Lincoln Unmasked*, 134.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> In Section 7.8.1 and 7.8.2. of this thesis, a comparison between Lincoln’s use of the Bible, and that of the other American Presidents will be submitted.

not telling people pleasant truths to endear himself; he called the nation to repent and spoke of the need to obey God or be destroyed, which can hardly be described as a crowd-pleasing exercise.

If Lincoln's engagement with the Bible, in his treatment of the Will of God, were simply his attempt to conduct some form of public relations exercise, then the following could be equally asserted. The volume of material that can be feasibly connected to Lincoln's possible engagement with the Bible on the will of God, both private and public, strongly suggests that Lincoln was willing to engage in a prolonged and rather cynical deception. This required him not only to present himself with a slightly exaggerated 'spin,' but to present himself wilfully as something he was not, namely a believer in the value and truth of the message and text of the Bible. Oates instead submits that Lincoln was not sceptical about the Christian faith but "was sceptical of organized religion ... yet he argued that an omnipotent God controlled all human destinies."<sup>227</sup>

### **6.5.3. Conclusion to Lincoln's treatment of the will of God**

Lincoln was burdened by an extreme awareness of his responsibility for the preservation of the Union, as well as his ultimate responsibility for the lives of thousands of actual and potential war casualties. This appeared to have motivated him to a deeper understanding of and deference to the will of God. In his personal Meditation, Presidential letters, Proclamations, and his Second Inaugural Address, there is a case for submitting that Lincoln displayed a measure of influence from the Bible upon his understanding of the will of God. In the light of the evidence presented in this section, it is reasonable to submit that Lincoln's Presidency and in particular his understanding of the nature of the War would have been different without the influence of the Bible upon his understanding of the will of God.

### **6.6. Herndon's treatment of Lincoln's use of the Bible**

The place of the Bible has now been examined in Lincoln's political career. Before treating the Second Inaugural Address, there is an important issue that requires investigation. Throughout Lincoln's journey to the highest office one, man occupied what could be considered a ringside seat, his partner William Herndon. Herndon was

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<sup>227</sup> Stephen B. Oates, *Abraham Lincoln: The Man Behind the Myth* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1984), 40.

uniquely placed to comment on Lincoln. He both knew and admired Lincoln as a friend and colleague.<sup>228</sup> Herndon's biography on Lincoln has provided an essential historical resource. It is almost certainly impossible to ignore Herndon and gain a worthwhile understanding of Lincoln. However, Herndon's treatment of Lincoln is generally accepted to have been partially flawed. To accept therefore that Herndon is irreplaceable is not a declaration of his infallibility.

The reason for raising the issue of Herndon's contribution in this thesis is that he was somewhat dismissive of Lincoln's use of the Bible. Scholars who seek to argue this position or simply to dismiss the importance of the Bible in Lincoln's compositions, have relied heavily upon Herndon as a valid commentator, usually citing his proximity to Lincoln as validation for his claims.<sup>229</sup> Indeed, it would appear a responsible approach to consult the man who shared an office with Lincoln for so many years. However, careful examination of Herndon's claims and arguments suggests that there is valid scope for a different interpretation. During the progress of this research, a visit to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois, uncovered some hitherto unseen material that calls into question the reliability of Herndon's evaluation. This section will examine the validity of Herndon's treatment of Lincoln's use of the Bible in the light of this discovery.

### **6.6.1. Herndon's dismissal of Lincoln's use of the Bible**

Towards the end of his work Herndon wrote the following, "I felt sure that even after my long and intimate acquaintance with Mr Lincoln I never fully knew and understood him."<sup>230</sup> He also stated, "He never revealed himself entirely to any one man, and therefore he will always to a certain extent remain enveloped in doubt,"<sup>231</sup> as well as asserting:

I always believed I could read him as thoroughly as any man, and yet he was so different in many respects from any other one I ever met before or since his time that I cannot say I comprehend him.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Lincoln and Herndon were legal partners from the dissolution of the Logan/Lincoln partnership in 1844, until Lincoln left to assume the Presidency in 1861. Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1*. 229.

<sup>229</sup> Examples of scholars who based their assumption on Herndon's assessment are as follows: Lamson, *Abraham Lincoln*; Jayne, *American Manifesto*; Briggs, *Lincoln's Speeches*; DiLorenzo, *Lincoln Unmasked*; Kaplan, *Biography of a Writer*; Bray, *Reading With Lincoln*; Gienapp, *Lincoln and Civil War*; Guelzo, *Redeemer President*.

<sup>230</sup> Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 2*. 292.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*



Herndon claimed that Lincoln often quoted from the Bible but never read it through.<sup>233</sup> This is a curious assertion, as in his own account of Lincoln's youth Herndon recorded that "He kept the Bible and Aesop's Fables always within reach, and read them over and over again."<sup>234</sup>

It is possible to see evidence of Herndon's refusal to recognise Lincoln's use of the Bible in his commentary on the lectures on 'Discoveries and Inventions.' Herndon dedicates half a paragraph to explaining the lecture content thus, "He recounted the wonderful improvements in machinery, the arts, and sciences. Now and then he indulged in a humorous paragraph, and witticisms freely sprinkled."<sup>235</sup> This moderate assessment was not mirrored by comments he made in a letter to his literary collaborator Jesse W. Weik, in which he referred to the Lecturers as "a lifeless thing."<sup>236</sup> Herndon chose not even to mention the fact that the Lectures relied considerably upon the Bible for their composition.<sup>237</sup> Briggs suggests that Herndon was embarrassed about Lincoln's reliance on the Bible.<sup>238</sup>

Herndon's attempts to harmonise his assessment with the considerable body of Lincoln's compositions that appear to be influenced by the Bible are most interesting. A person who would quote the Bible often and expansively, and yet did not believe in its inspiration or authority would surely be considered duplicitous. Herndon offered the following rebuttal of any slight on Lincoln's integrity:

If at any time anytime in his life he was sceptical of the divine origin of the Bible he ought not for that reason to be condemned. For he accepted the practical precepts of that great book as binding alike upon his head and his conscience. The benevolence of his impulses, the seriousness of his convictions, and the nobility of his character are evidences unimpeachable that his soul was ever filled with the exalted purity and sublime faith of natural religion.<sup>239</sup>

Herndon saw no dichotomy between Lincoln's reputation for integrity and his use of the Bible, while only accepting the practical morality of the text. This position would

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 302.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., *Vol. 1.* 41.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., *Vol. 2.* 158.

<sup>236</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 1.* Location12697.

<sup>237</sup> Lectures on Discoveries and Inventions are examined in Sections 3.3.1 - 3.3.3 of this thesis.

<sup>238</sup> The following quotation has already been offered in Section 3.3.3 of this thesis. It is offered again for the reader's convenience, "Herndon's recoil at the almost childish simplicity of his partner's reliance on biblical evidence." Briggs, *Lincoln's Speeches*, 205.

<sup>239</sup> Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 2.* 156.

be more laudable if Lincoln's use of the Bible was exclusively related to the scripture's treatment of issues pertaining to practical morality. The coverage of Lincoln's use of the Bible in this thesis demonstrates that this was far from the case. Full acceptance of Herndon's position would require the reader to ignore Lincoln's considerable treatment of the will of God, and the extensive material in the Second Inaugural Address. Lincoln spoke of God's intervention and well as individual and national dependence on God, without whose help failure was inevitable. Lincoln did not merely assert the moral and practical passage of the Bible. In this consideration that Lincoln only accepted "the practical precepts of that great book," Herndon would seem to be factually incorrect. Herndon was a devotee of transcendentalist Theodore Parker, and he appeared to have little time for a conservative approach to the Bible.<sup>240</sup> It is possible that Herndon's own thoughts on the limitations of the Bible were projected on to Lincoln in his biography.

#### **6.6.1.1. Herndon's response to Reed**

One of the most emphatic statements of Herndon's regarding Lincoln's use of the Bible appeared in the form of a lecture. In November 1873 *Scribner's Magazine* published a lecture that had been delivered on numerous occasions by Reverend James Reed.<sup>241</sup> Reed attacked Lamon's biography of Lincoln,<sup>242</sup> which bore the opinion of Herndon<sup>243</sup> that Lincoln was an infidel and that his use of the Bible was largely a political tactic. Reed proceeded to state his conclusion that Lincoln was in fact a Christian.<sup>244</sup> Herndon's response was a lecture entitled *Lincoln's Religion*.<sup>245</sup> In this lecture there are a number of occasions in which Herndon unequivocally stated his position on Lincoln's use of the Bible.

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<sup>240</sup> Grodzins, *American Heretic*, xiii; Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 2*. Location 10487; Charles B. Strozier, "The Lives of William Herndon," *The Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 14, no. 1 (1993).

<sup>241</sup> Reverend James Armstrong Reed First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, Illinois in 1870. Reed had not therefore been incumbent when Lincoln was resident in Illinois. Douglas Crawford McMurtrie, ed. *Lincoln's Religion: The Text Delivered by William H. Herndon and Rev James A. Reed, and a Letter by C.F.B.* (Chicago: The Black Cat Press, 1936), 8.

<sup>242</sup> Lamon *Life of Abraham Lincoln*.

<sup>243</sup> Paul M. Zall, "Sourcing the Text of Lamon's Recollections," *The Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 30, no. 2 (2009); Wilson and Davis, *Herndon's Informants*, xxii-xxiii.

<sup>244</sup> McMurtrie, *Lincoln's Religion*, 45-86.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-44.

Herndon proceeded to attack Josiah Holland's<sup>246</sup> 1866 biography of Lincoln. Holland described Lincoln as a "Christian President."<sup>247</sup> He stated his understanding that Lincoln's use of the Bible on such matters as the providence of God was a genuine expression of his convictions.<sup>248</sup> Neely suggests that Holland's biography "exasperated Herndon,"<sup>249</sup> who took the opportunity of the lecture to denounce it as "fictitious, romantic, false."<sup>250</sup> Herndon was clearly passionately exercised by Holland's claims of Lincoln's faith, which he denounced thus, "much twaddle is used to show that Mr Lincoln was a Christian."<sup>251</sup> In fact he employed the word "twaddle" on two other occasions regarding the similar reminiscences of Brooks.<sup>252</sup>

Herndon was unable to deny that Lincoln used the Bible in his political compositions. However, he simply dismissed such activity as political expediency, "Mr Lincoln was the president of a Christian people, and he but used their ideas, language, speech and forms."<sup>253</sup> For Herndon it was simply Lincoln's ability to adapt to his audience, "When he was talking to a Christian, he adapted himself to the Christian."<sup>254</sup> Herndon further suggested, "When a man is invited to address such societies it is implied, unless the man reserves the right to say what he pleases, that he confine himself to their ideas."<sup>255</sup>

Interestingly, Herndon spoke of his own view of religion as being Universal, and dismissed Christianity as a limited local expression of that universal religion.<sup>256</sup> He proceeded to refer to a letter that he received from Lincoln's pastor, Rev. James Smith. Smith recalled that Lincoln "did avow his belief in the divine authority, and inspiration of the Scriptures."<sup>257</sup> In comprehensive dismissal of Smith's testimony, Herndon retorted, "I believe that Mr Lincoln did not become a firm believer in the Christian religion."<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Josiah Gilber Holland (1819-1881) was Coeditor of the *Springfield Massachusetts Republican*. He delivered the celebrated funeral eulogy for Lincoln in Springfield, Massachusetts. He then published a biography of Lincoln in 1866. Neely, *Lincoln Encyclopedia*, 194.

<sup>247</sup> Holland, *Abraham Lincoln*. 456

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 151; 323; 453; 531; 561.

<sup>249</sup> Neely, *Lincoln Encyclopedia*.194.

<sup>250</sup> McMurtrie, *Lincoln's Religion...* 14.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*

Herndon's emphatic conclusion to his lecture was this, "and let this be written in history and on Mr Lincoln's tomb - 'He died an unbeliever.'"<sup>259</sup> Herndon's lecture never dealt with what Lincoln actually said or wrote, especially during the Presidency. Indeed, he offered no attempt in his paper, or in his biography, to engage with Lincoln's significant use of the Bible during the Presidency. Herndon's advice to Lamon, as he commenced a Lincoln biography, was to "weigh well what is said, search for opportunities, casts of mind, education, and veracities."<sup>260</sup> In the case of his examination of Lincoln's engagement with the Bible, it appears that Herndon failed to heed his own excellent advice. The intent here is not necessarily to agree with Reed's conclusion; indeed, the intention of this research is not to seek to establish whether Lincoln was a Christian or not. However, the point is to recognise that Herndon was very passionately provoked by any hint of suggestion that Lincoln took the Bible seriously. It rather appeared that Herndon's own strongly held views on the Bible and the Christian faith forbade him even to consider that Lincoln could be sympathetic.

In this thesis it has been demonstrated that the testimony of those closest to him considered Lincoln to be very private about his personal beliefs and unwilling to discuss personal matters in general. An 1874 letter written by Isaac Gogdal<sup>261</sup> recounted an 1858 meeting with Lincoln at his law offices. Herndon was either present, or certainly in the same building at the time of this engagement. Lincoln spoke of possible Universalist beliefs, although "He understood punishment for sin to be a Biblical doctrine."<sup>262</sup> It is interesting to note that Lincoln told Cogdal that "he never took part in the argument or discussion of theological questions."<sup>263</sup> When considering Lincoln's Presidential treatment of the Divine will it is interesting to read Herndon's comments, which are extracted from a letter to a "friend of uncertain identity," "Mr. Lincoln believed that what was to be would be, and no prayers of ours could arrest or reverse the decree; he was a fatalist, and thought the fates ruled the world."<sup>264</sup> This remark does not take into account any of the material in Lincoln's Farewell Address, his treatment of the will of God, as well as large sections of the

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>260</sup> Wilson and Davis, *Herndon's Informants*, xxiii.

<sup>261</sup> The letter was address to B.F. Irwin and dated the 10<sup>th</sup> April 1874. Irwin, "The Evidence."

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> William H. Herndon, *Lincoln's Philosophy of Life: A Letter Written to a Friend of Uncertain Identity* (Los Angeles: H.E. Barker, 1922: 100 Copies Printed), Copy Number 11. The Lincoln Collection, ALPL.

Second Inaugural Address. Herndon expresses in the strongest terms his opinion of the beliefs of his legal partner who rarely, if ever, discussed such matters. It is difficult to understand how Herndon could have claimed such definitive knowledge about Lincoln's thoughts on the Bible if he was loath to discuss theological matters.

It is also pertinent to make the point that, despite Herndon's warm and comparatively close relationship with Lincoln, there is a distinct gap in his knowledge of the man in question. Herndon spoke to Lincoln the day before his departure to Washington DC to assume the Presidency. He proceeded to correspond with Lincoln on a number of occasions to discuss practical matters in connection with their legal practice. Herndon only made one visit to see Lincoln in Washington DC; it was in 1862 and would be the final occasion that the two men would see each other.<sup>265</sup> There is some considerable weight of opinion to support the notion that the experience of high office, and the horrors of the War, had a profound effect on Lincoln. It is possible to submit that Herndon knew little of Lincoln during his final years, and was not intimately acquainted with all his writings and speeches of the period. This in part contributes to understanding Herndon's failure to acknowledge Lincoln's considerable engagement with the Bible from 1861 to 1865.

### **6.6.2. Discovery of new Herndon material**

The issue of objectivity in historical writing is one of the most important factors in determining the value of the claims of a given biography. Novick offers the following assessment of the importance of objectivity, stating that it is

A commitment to the reality of the past, and to truth as correspondence to that reality; a sharp separation between knower and known, between fact and value, and, above all between history and fiction.<sup>266</sup>

The question arises as to whether Herndon's definitive statements on Lincoln's engagement with the Bible can be considered to contain any reasonable evidence of objectivity. During the course of this research, access was granted to examine The Lincoln Collection at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois. The Collection's curator, Dr James Cornelius, had recently organised and verified the bibliographic records of some books that belonged to Herndon. Three of

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<sup>265</sup> David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln's Herndon* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press Inc., 1989), 188-189.

<sup>266</sup> Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. Reprint, 1999), 1-2.

these volumes were on the theme of religion and science.<sup>267</sup> The suggestion was that it might be of interest to this thesis to read something that Herndon himself had read on these subjects. The volumes were found to contain Herndon's signature and a considerable amount of notes made in pencil in his very distinctive handwriting. Closer examination of Herndon's notorious, almost illegible writing<sup>268</sup> revealed some evidence of use to this thesis.

It is impossible to accurately date Herndon's notes from any internal evidence; however, the books were published between 1874 and 1882, so it is reasonable to suggest the earliest of these notes were made at least ten years after Lincoln's assassination. Herndon's notes are not made in the text of the books; in fact there are no markings in the main body of these volumes at all. Herndon used the blank pages at the beginning and end to write notes, sometimes in list format. This would appear to be of particular importance because the notes presented here are not a compilation of thoughts which were scattered through books. These are lists of bullet points and short paragraphs, and represent something of the flow of Herndon's thoughts. There are two particular aspects to Herndon's notes that relate to the topic at hand. Firstly, he wrote about the nature of the Bible and the Christian religion, and secondly about Lincoln's belief and practice. In view of the fact that this discovery was hitherto unknown, and therefore unpublished, complete quotations of the relevant portions of Herndon's notes are offered. It should be remembered that these are notes and as such do not flow easily to the reader, and contain a considerable amount of grammatical and spelling errors.

#### **6.6.2.1. Herndon's notes on the Bible**

Herndon made notes on his reading, and these reflect his own unorthodox beliefs.<sup>269</sup> Herndon's notes indicate that he appeared pleased to discover what he considered to

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<sup>267</sup> Charles Bradlaugh, *A Few Words about the Devil and other Biographical Sketches and Essays: Second Edition* (New York: Charles P. Somerby, 1875); John William Draper, *History of Conflict Between Religion and Science: Eighth Edition* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1882); E.L. Youmans, ed. *The Culture Demanded by Modern Life: A Series of Addresses and Arguments on the Claims of Scientific Education* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1874).

<sup>268</sup> Wilson and Davis declared their difficulty in transcribing Herndon's Handwriting. The writing is attractive in appearance, but the formation of the letters makes it initially difficult to read. Wilson and Davis, *Herndon's Informants*, xix.

<sup>269</sup> "What man wishes to be but cannot be he makes his God, What man wants but cannot get he makes his God ... That philosophy which asserts that upon our ultimate analysis of things it is found that spirit is not the cause of the manifestation of the universe to the mind of man, but that the matter and forces of nature are the cause of the manifestations for the universe to the mind of man. ... Science is a

be evidence of the errors of the Bible. In the book entitled *A Few Words About the Devil*, Herndon listed several instances in which the author highlighted what he considered to be inconsistencies within the Bible. Herndon referred to unnamed texts that “were not in the older Bibles.”<sup>270</sup> He proceeded to list other deities from the great world religions and commented thus, “all of those had a good principle.”<sup>271</sup> In his 1873 lecture he spoke of universal and local religion; here these thoughts are again expressed. He wrote, “The trinity was not in the Bible, Irenaeus was the first to speak of it in 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.”<sup>272</sup> He then attacked the Gospels’ teaching on the miracles of Jesus suggesting they are unreliable because “They are not mentioned in the epistles of the New Testament.”<sup>273</sup> He further questioned their validity by questioning date and authorship, “The gospels (4) were not 170yrs AD. No one knows the authors.”<sup>274</sup> Herndon continued to attack the authenticity of the Canon of Scripture. He stated that “There are 4 Epistles of Paul that are genuine ... Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans.”<sup>275</sup> He again criticized the doctrine of the Trinity, citing three page numbers that present a case for the Trinity being a 4<sup>th</sup>-century addition to the Bible.<sup>276</sup> Herndon listed the reference for pages 220-221, which apparently prove that “Bible not inspired, written after 2<sup>nd</sup> Century.”<sup>277</sup>

Herndon proceeded to attack the doctrine of the Trinity, “trinity idea was not fixed till about 320-400 AD. The Christians destroyed and burned all that contradicts this.”<sup>278</sup> He then assailed the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception as unbiblical, claiming it was devised by “Ignatius 115 yrs AD.”<sup>279</sup> He continued in his denunciation by pointing out as evidence that “Paul does not and Peter does not”<sup>280</sup> mention it. These notes listed here are not carefully edited for this particular purpose; they appear as a list all together. Herndon was deliberately scribbling one accusation after another, against the Bible.

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revelation to man through the methods of which God ground the world it is a contradiction” Notes made by Herndon on blank pages. Youmans, *Culture Demanded*.

<sup>270</sup> Notes made by Herndon on blank pages. Bradlaugh, *Few Words*.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Notes made by Herndon on blank pages. Draper, *History of Conflict*.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Notes made by Herndon. Bradlaugh, *Few Words*.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

A most revealing comment occurred in the Draper volume's notes. Herndon attacked the Pentateuch on the grounds that Christians "Consider this, as a record, vouchsafed and dictated by the Almighty, it commands not only scientific but universal contempt."<sup>281</sup> The interesting nature of this language is not that Herndon was unable to accept the claims of the Genesis creation narrative, but that he considered it worthy of "contempt." This statement is consistent with the tone of Herndon's notes. The purpose of these citations and evaluation is not to criticize Herndon for holding and expressing such beliefs. It is furnished to demonstrate that many years after Lincoln's death, Herndon was still actively looking for evidence with which to denounce the Bible, and some of this was expressed in rather strong terms. This new evidence is submitted in order to answer the question of the degree to which Herndon can be considered to have presented a reasonable and objective treatment of Lincoln's engagement with the Bible. What immediately becomes clear from these notes is that Herndon possessed deeply held convictions against the validity of the Bible and a number of central tenets of the Christian faith.

#### **6.6.2.2. Herndon's notes on Lincoln**

A particularly stimulating aspect of this research was the realisation that Herndon's notes actually included comments about Lincoln himself. Herndon repeated the theme reflected in his lecture, that Lincoln used the Bible simply to please a Christian public:

the true and just Mr Lincoln was a man of politics, was a shrewd man ... He was a true man and a noble one ... Mr Lincoln was a man of the most profound policies and was willing that the Christian world should hear re the wanted<sup>282</sup> and would have no division in his administration if he could avoid it. He used the Christian as a means to his end vision union forever.<sup>283</sup>

It is curious that Herndon extolled Lincoln's integrity and then in a matter of a few lines of notes stated that Lincoln was prepared to use "the Christian," which presumably referred to Lincoln's use of the Christian (the Bible's) language as a

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<sup>281</sup> Notes made by Herndon. Draper, *History of Conflict*.

<sup>282</sup> This phrase "re the wanted" appears to be a typing error but is actually Herndon's original wording. It is to be remembered that these are extremely rough notes that Herndon did not intend for public consumption.

<sup>283</sup> Notes made by Herndon. Youmans, *Culture Demanded*.



“means to his end.” However Herndon chose to express this thought, it still amounted to Lincoln using the Bible and deliberately giving the impression that he was something he was not, although Herndon continued to assert that this apparent duplicity did not, in his opinion, impugn Lincoln’s character.

Herndon’s strength of feeling can be seen in these notes. He was still clearly exercised about the nature of Lincoln’s personal belief and made the following notes:

If any truthful and candid man, not biased by his perspective or by his creeds has heard Mr Lincoln in formal prayer, let him come under his own hand and say – when it was- where it was – who was present and who heard it – and what was said by Mr Lincoln. By all means let us have the facts – the whole fact – just as my happiness without coloring. By all means let the truth comes: It will not hurt any man’s beliefs – until 1860 I know that Mr Lincoln did not believe in any unjust God: he knows in a sufficient cause called by him in his life up to 1856 ... In conclusion though he did pray – if you please formally – that does not prove the bottom mark of Christianity – namely original sin not atonement therefore through the death of God. Lincolns many and vociferous calls on God, the religious traps are no evidence of his Christianity.<sup>284</sup>

This final sentence is of particular interest in examining Herndon’s opinion of Lincoln’s use of the Bible. Having asserted his belief that during the 1850s Lincoln did not engage in “formal” prayer, Herndon’s reference to “Lincoln’s many vociferous calls on God” would most probably refer to his Presidential proclamations and calls for national prayer.<sup>285</sup> Despite that fact that Lincoln’s declarations on this matter displayed evidence of his engagement with the Bible, Herndon stated that they were inconsequential and no conclusion about Lincoln should therefore be drawn. His thinking ignored the intensity and eloquence of Lincoln’s statements, and he continued in his assertion that Lincoln was an infidel who was using the language of the Bible purely to accomplish his political objectives.

Herndon continued to pour out his personal feelings on Lincoln’s faith and use of the Bible:

It is said to some that Mr Lincoln in his later days leaned towards Christianity. He felt no doubt that he was the instrument of his God and

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> This material has been dealt with in Section 6.5 of this thesis.

expected his gratitude solely by repetition of his name. Mr Lincoln in one of his messages said – ‘God has his purposes’ and remains thereof that no amount of human prayer will change Gods purposes. It is often said as mere hear say that Mr Lincoln was a man of prayer and had faith in the effect of that to change Gods will. This denies what he said in his message. It denies – contradicts his whole life. While here and up to 1858-9 he was a fatalist and man of his acts and expression in his life to prove it through these rumours of a tendency – a leaning to Christianity are true and though he prayed – which in not unnatural here it does not prove that he believed in bottom line of Christianity.<sup>286</sup>

In this section Herndon described Lincoln as a fatalist, which is consistent with his printed opinion:

Did Mr Lincoln believe in prayer as a means of moving God? ... These expressions are merely conventional. They do not prove that Mr Lincoln believed that prayer is a means of moving God.<sup>287</sup>

Many years after Lincoln’s demise, and in the context of his private reading, Herndon was still agitated by the suggestion that Lincoln’s use of the Bible was a genuine expression of his thinking. Indeed, Herndon’s use of the phrase “God has his purposes”<sup>288</sup> is significant. He was in fact misquoting Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address, in which Lincoln actually said, “The Almighty has his own purposes.”<sup>289</sup> Herndon drew the conclusion that Lincoln meant “no amount of human prayer will change Gods purposes.”<sup>290</sup> Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address was delivered in March 1865, and was therefore composed after all of Lincoln’s various deliberations upon the will of God and God’s intervention in national affairs. The fact that Herndon could reflect on this Address, and still deny the important place of the Bible in Lincoln’s political speeches, is indicative of his personal agenda, as already discussed.

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<sup>286</sup> Notes made by Herndon. Youmans, *Culture Demanded*.

<sup>287</sup> Pennell, *Religious Views*, Locations 299-304. This quotation has already been offered in Section 5.5.1.2.5 of this thesis. It is repeated for the reader’s convenience to emphasize the point at hand.

<sup>288</sup> Notes made by Herndon. Youmans, *Culture Demanded*.

<sup>289</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8. 33.

<sup>290</sup> Notes made by Herndon. Youmans, *Culture Demanded*.

### 6.6.2.3. Conclusion to Herndon's notes

Lincoln had been dead for at the very least ten years by the time Herndon began to make these notes. He was a man in his 60s<sup>291</sup> writing purely for his own interest. He displayed a distrust of the Bible that appeared to fuel his determination to dismiss Lincoln's use of it as political opportunism.

What is clear from these notes is that Herndon was still passionately searching for evidence against the Bible. The reason for mentioning Herndon's age is that he had held strong views about the Bible, borne out of his transcendentalism, for many years.<sup>292</sup> And yet he was still actively seeking to strengthen those conviction, even as a mature man. It is impossible to know exactly what Herndon's thoughts were, but it is not unreasonable to deduce that a man of his age, who purchased books about the contradictions between science and religion, and proceeded to make very tightly compacted, strongly worded notes highlighting the errors of the Bible, can hardly be considered an impartial commentator on that which pertains to the Bible. Herndon's published remarks have already cast some doubt on the validity of his treatment of Lincoln's interaction with the Bible, but these notes rather confirm his inadequacy to provide worthwhile comment on this subject.

Herndon's notes serve to suggest that he was possessed by strong views about the Bible. He listed the evidence against the Bible that he had clearly been looking for. If Lincoln had not used the Bible as he did in his political career, then Herndon's treatment of him would have been accepted without question. However, his assertion of Lincoln's personal indifference to the Bible is inconsistent with the internal evidence of Lincoln's own remarks. Braden stated:

The reliability of Herndon's evaluation of Lincoln's reading is difficult to determine because he recorded his recollections long after Lincoln's death and tended to emphasize his own importance.<sup>293</sup>

This tendency of Herndon's to project himself and his opinions onto the Lincoln narrative appears to be a particular feature of his treatment of Lincoln's use of the Bible. Herndon appeared unwilling, or at least unable, to accept that Lincoln held different views on the Bible to himself. He almost ignored Lincoln's use of the Bible

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<sup>291</sup> The books in which Herndon made these notes are published in 1874, 1875 and 1882. He was born in 1818, which means he was 60 years old between the publishing dates. Neely, *Lincoln Encyclopedia*, 194.

<sup>292</sup> Herndon was corresponding with Theodore and exchanging radical religious and political views from the early 1850s. Strozier, "William Herndon," Footnote 25.

<sup>293</sup> Braden, *Abraham Lincoln*, 49.

in his biography, and he attacked Reed for suggesting its significance while dismissing the arguments of others as “twaddle.”<sup>294</sup> His treatment of Lincoln in both lecture and biography suggests that he had a personal agenda regarding the Bible and Christianity in general. Herndon was entitled to hold whatever views he desired, but this evidence further strengthens the contention that Herndon’s major conclusions on Lincoln’s faith, and in particular his use of the Bible, are rendered unreliable.

### 6.6.3. Reaction to Herndon’s treatment

In offering the suggestion that Herndon is an unreliable commentator on Lincoln’s use of the Bible, some other considered opinions are of value.

#### 6.6.3.1. The Irwin article

Another Springfield associate of Lincoln’s, B.F. Irwin, wrote an 1874 article that touched upon the subject at hand. Irwin and Herndon were friends,<sup>295</sup> but he did not share Herndon’s dismissive views of Lincoln’s use of the Bible. Indeed, even as a friend Irwin could recognise Herndon’s agenda. He made the point that since 1870 “there has been a constant effort upon the part of the Hon. W.H. Herndon ... to convince and prove to the world that Abraham Lincoln lived and died an infidel.”<sup>296</sup>

It is worth noting the statement supplied by Mostiller to Irwin in 1874, in which he recalled Lincoln’s Congressional campaign. Mostiller was present when he heard Lincoln questioned on the charge of infidelity which Cartwright had levelled; he recalled that

Lincoln unqualifiedly denied the charge of infidelity, and said, in addition, his parents were Baptists, and brought him up in the belief of the Christian religion; and he believed in the Christian religion as much as anyone, but was sorry to say he had made no pretensions to religion himself.<sup>297</sup>

Herndon claimed, “all admit that Lincoln was once an infidel.”<sup>298</sup> Irwin stated that Herndon was “wholly mistaken,”<sup>299</sup> and proceeded to deny hearing any associate make a claim for Lincoln’s infidelity; in fact he testified to having heard over 100

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<sup>294</sup> McMurtrie, *Lincoln’s Religion*, 17.

<sup>295</sup> Irwin described his association with Herndon thus “He and I have been for twenty five years good personal friends.” Irwin, *The Evidence*, 2.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>297</sup> Statement to Irwin from Thomas Mostiller, dated 28<sup>th</sup> April 1874. *Ibid.*

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*

people express their astonishment at Herndon's claim.<sup>300</sup> Irwin continued thus, "Mr Lincoln used, and quoted more scripture than any man in the nation; and that he quoted the parables and language of Christ oftener than any public man living."<sup>301</sup> He also commented on Lincoln's pragmatic attitude to the Bible stating that "he used it as being of Divine authority, and applicable to the affairs of earth."<sup>302</sup>

Irwin correctly assessed the seriousness of the situation. Herndon asserted the integrity of Lincoln while stating that his use of the Bible, at a time of utmost national seriousness, was merely a tactic to ingratiate him with the electorate. Irwin presented the stark reality of accepting Herndon's conclusion, "He could not have been an infidel without being a base hypocrite; and I don't believe a more honest man lived on earth."<sup>303</sup>

#### **6.6.3.2. Further rebuttal of Herndon's assessment**

Other commentators have offered reasonable rebuttals of Herndon's assessment of Lincoln's use of the Bible. Isaac Arnold<sup>304</sup> was another early biographer and friend of Lincoln. His biography also incurred the disapproval of Herndon because of its assessment of the genuine inspiration of the Bible in Lincoln's work. Arnold spoke of Lincoln's extensive reading of the Bible, and the effect it had upon his political writings and speeches.<sup>305</sup> Arnold's biography contains imperfections but is nevertheless well respected.<sup>306</sup>

The Lincoln Collection at the ALPL contains an important but unpublished article by Crissey that refers to a comment made by Lincoln's oldest son Robert Todd Lincoln. When questioned about his father's faith, his answer was to quote the words of Arnold, which he considered accurate:

When the unbeliever shall convince the people that this man, whose life was straightforward, truthful, clear and honest, was a sham and hypocrite, then, but not before, may he make the world doubt his Christianity.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>304</sup> Isaac Newton Arnold (1815-1885) was a United States Congressman during the Civil War, and a friend and supporter of Abraham Lincoln; Neely, *Lincoln Encyclopedia*, 8-9.

<sup>305</sup> Arnold, *Abraham Lincoln*, 29.

<sup>306</sup> Neely, *Lincoln Encyclopedia*, 9.

<sup>307</sup> Elwell Crissey, "Was Lincoln a Christian?" Unpublished manuscript, Lincoln Collection, ALPL.

This statement by Robert is in direct contraction to Herndon's position. In fact, Robert's use of the term "the unbeliever" could possibly suggest that he was referring to Herndon and his treatment of Lincoln.

Another unpublished article in the Lincoln Collection, by J.W. Starr Junior, was written 61 years after Lincoln's death.<sup>308</sup> Starr quoted Washburne's endorsement of Arnold's work, "Mr Arnold has shown in his life of Mr Lincoln that he has a full and just appreciation of the true province of history."<sup>309</sup> Starr also recorded material from Robert. He described a confidential letter

from Robert T. Lincoln, then connected with the Pullman Company of Chicago, in which it was stated that the views of his father's opinions on the subject which he considered to be most satisfactory were those given by Isaac N. Arnold in his biography of President Lincoln. He further stated that this was for my private information and not publication, as he had been careful to refrain from entering into any discussion about his father.<sup>310</sup>

It appears that Robert was almost as private as his father in discussing the contentious matters of faith, but here again is powerful testimony that Lincoln's use of the Bible was not as Herndon suggested. Wolf was correct when he asserted that "The key to Lincoln's faith is the Bible, read in a way quite independent of the orthodox Christianity of his day."<sup>311</sup> Jones offered the following comment, "The place of the Bible in Lincoln's education is conceded by all who have written about him. His familiarity with the Holy Scriptures was a fact attested by much that he said and wrote."<sup>312</sup>

#### **6.6.4. Conclusion to Herndon's treatment**

The combination of already published material and the discovery of the handwritten notes serve to compound the contention that Herndon's views of Lincoln's use of the Bible cannot be considered as reliable evaluation. The testimonies of others here

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<sup>308</sup> The article did have a copyright entry in the Library of Congress list for 1926: *Library of Congress Copyright Entries. Part 1, Group 1: Books: New Series*. Vol. 23, 1926, 1-28 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1927).

<sup>309</sup> J.W. Starr, *A Biography of Lincolniana* (Published and Printed Privately, 1926). Lincoln Collection, ALPL.

<sup>310</sup> Starr, *Biography of Lincolniana*.

<sup>311</sup> William J. Wolf, "Lincoln and the Bible," *Presbyterian Life*, July 1964: 11.

<sup>312</sup> Jones, *Lincoln and the Preachers*, 135.

mentioned also suggest that Herndon's personal agenda led him to distort and dilute the validity of Lincoln's use of the Bible. During the progress of this thesis it has been observed that scholars who questioned the importance and extent to which Lincoln's use of the Bible was a genuine expression of his beliefs, did so by relying significantly on Herndon's contentions. In the light of the evaluation and findings here presented, it not unreasonable to submit that any case constructed upon Herndon's treatment of this subject requires serious re-evaluation.

### **6.7. In conclusion to Chapter Six**

This chapter has sought to demonstrate Lincoln's use of the Bible during the final Presidential years. There is evidence of a deepening of his development as Lincoln spoke unashamedly about his belief that the nation needed to understand and yield in repentance to the Will of God. On one of the rare occasion in which he composed a Presidential public address, there is evidence recognised by a variety of scholars of the influence of the Bible, in The Gettysburg Address. In these matters Lincoln never assumed the role of a preacher; when he engaged with the Bible it was always entirely consistent with his role as President. It is the contention of this thesis, that occasions mentioned in this chapter continue to build the case for the Bible as a considerable source of inspiration and authority with which Lincoln perceived and delivered the most important utterances about the nature of War and the Republic itself. It is not an exaggeration to state that in the Gettysburg Address, and in his understanding of the will of God, Lincoln's use of the Bible became essential to his message and his determination to prosecute the War to its final conclusion.

## CHAPTER 7

### LINCOLN'S SECOND INAUGURAL ADDRESS

#### 7.1. Introduction

The importance of Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, both immediately and subsequently, has granted it an almost unique place in the body of Lincoln compositions. Indeed, the complete text of the Address is inscribed upon the inner walls of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC. In his second inaugural appearance there is a considerable case for stating that Lincoln made extensive and expansive use of the Bible, to the extent that its consideration commands the majority of this chapter. This chapter will conclude with an examination of one of the central accusations levelled at Lincoln's use of the Bible, namely that he was simply using scripture as a tactic to endear himself to a largely Christian electorate.

#### 7.2. The context of the Second Inaugural Address

During the first few months of 1864 the military advance of the Union had ground to a halt. General Sherman had besieged Atlanta, as had General Grant at Petersburg, yet both beleaguered Confederate forces betrayed no sign of capitulation. The casualties and general cost of the War had exacted a heavy toll on Northern civilian morale, and there was growing support for the new Democratic Candidate, former General G.B. McClellan, who stood on an electoral platform of making peace with the Confederacy.<sup>1</sup> These factors were combined with the fact that Lincoln had not enjoyed a high degree of personal popularity during his first period in office. In fact, as the great African American politician Fredrick Douglass acknowledged eleven years after Lincoln's death,<sup>2</sup> "Few great public men have ever been the victims of fiercer denunciation than Abraham Lincoln was, during his administration."<sup>3</sup>

During the election campaign of 1864 the Democrats attacked Lincoln's commencement and prosecution of the War, with special concentration on his

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<sup>1</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 2*. Location 41399.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick Douglass delivered the "Oration in memory of Abraham Lincoln," on the occasion of the unveiling of the Freedmen's Monument in Lincoln's honour, in Washington D.C. on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1876. Richard C. Sinopoli, ed. *From Many, One: Readings in American Political and Social Thought* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1997), 269.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.



movement towards emancipation.<sup>4</sup> The War involved a divided nation, but the opinion of the nation was by no means neatly polarised into pro-slavery and emancipation in the North. Indeed, many in the North had no enthusiasm for a conflict that appeared to have evolved into a war to end slavery.

Lincoln was by no means universally popular within his own Republican Party. A most striking example was his Minister of Finance Salmon P. Chase, who repeatedly criticized Lincoln while expressing his own Presidential aspirations.<sup>5</sup> Eventually Lincoln received the endorsement of his party.<sup>6</sup> Despite Lincoln's personal uncertainties regarding his re-election,<sup>7</sup> perfectly timed military triumphs in Atlanta and in the Shenandoah theatre, served to boost public confidence, which ushered in a decisive election victory for Lincoln.<sup>8</sup>

The date for Lincoln's Second Inauguration as President of the United States was set for 4<sup>th</sup> March 1865.<sup>9</sup> When that date arrived, a crowd in excess of 50,000 people gathered to hear Lincoln's Address.<sup>10</sup> Lincoln himself had been slightly unsettled by the performance of his new Vice-President, Andrew Johnson. The traditionally brief Vice-Presidential Inaugural Address in the Senate Chamber "became a rambling affair" due to the fact that Johnson was inebriated.<sup>11</sup> However, the crowds outside the Capitol building were, in the most part, expectant of a triumphal tone from the President's Address. The War was almost won<sup>12</sup> and there was an opportunity for vitriolic rhetoric. As Stout explained, the audience would be surprised by both the tone and the content of the Address.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "Pamphlet after pamphlet, editorial after editorial pounded away at Lincoln for his 'usurpations' and tyrannical aspirations, for the imprisonment of dissenters, for the draught, for the bloodshed, for the financial cost of the war and the new tools the administration employed to pay for it, and for emancipation." J.L. Weber, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2006), 184.

<sup>5</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 2*. Location 39215; Waugh, *Re-electing Lincoln*, 37.

<sup>6</sup> Waugh, *Re-electing Lincoln*, 196.

<sup>7</sup> Lincoln composed a memorandum expressing his doubts, "This morning, as for some days past, it seems exceedingly probable that this Administration will not be re-elected. Then it will be my duty to so co-operate with the President elect, as to save the Union between the election and the inauguration; as he will have secured his election on such ground that he can not possibly save it afterwards." 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1864, Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 7*. 514.

<sup>8</sup> Waugh, *Re-electing Lincoln*, 354.

<sup>9</sup> White, *Lincoln's Greatest Speech*, 21.

<sup>10</sup> Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln*, 661.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 662; White, *Lincoln's Greatest Speech*, 38.

<sup>12</sup> Hattaway and Jones, *How the North Won*; McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*; Roland, *An American Iliad*; John Keegan, *The American Civil War* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 2009. Reprint, New York: Random House, 2010); Cole C. Kingseed, *The American Civil War* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> Stout, *Upon the Altar*, 425.

### 7.3. The uniqueness and importance of the Address

Lincoln's Address stands out in historical memory as one of the most significant speeches delivered by an American President. It was in many ways a unique Address. It was the second shortest Inaugural Address, although Harris suggests it is "the most memorable."<sup>14</sup> The 701 words<sup>15</sup> of the Address would strike a chord with Lincoln's immediate audience, and especially with future generations. The Address marked the first occasion on which Lincoln addressed a major speech to an audience whose composition included a significant percentage of African Americans.<sup>16</sup>

A very visual expression of the importance of the Address in historical memory is its inscription upon The Lincoln Memorial in Washington, along with The Gettysburg Address.<sup>17</sup> Noll states that "the force of its religious meditation, has placed it among the small handful of semi sacred texts, by which Americans conceive their place in the world."<sup>18</sup> An example of the influence of this Address is displayed in the preparation of J.F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address. Kennedy's adviser and speechwriter Ted Sorensen recalled "Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and Second Inaugural had both been models for JFK and me."<sup>19</sup> Metcalf reflected that Lincoln's second was "the most profound and poetic of all inaugural addresses."<sup>20</sup> Braden wrote thus of place of the Address in historical memory: "Because it was epideictic in character, profound in thought, and eloquent in language, the address has assumed a mythic quality."<sup>21</sup> These quotations are merely a sample of expression of the far-reaching effects of the Address, which is universally accepted as one of the most important deliveries in American history. For the purpose of understanding the place of the Bible in Lincoln's political speeches, the Address is important because it became an insight into the thinking of the President concerning the destiny of the nation at its most critical juncture.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Harris, *Lincoln's Last Months*, 140.

<sup>15</sup> Calculated from Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8. 332-333.

<sup>16</sup> H.L. Gates, ed. *Lincoln on Race and Slavery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009) Kindle edition, xxix and xlvi.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.nps.gov/linc/index.htm> accessed 12<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathon Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2002), 426.

<sup>19</sup> Ted Sorensen, *Counsellor: A Life at the Edge of History* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 220.

<sup>20</sup> Allan Metcalf, *Presidential Voices: Speaking Styles from George Washington to George W. Bush* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004).

<sup>21</sup> Braden, *Public Speaker*, 88.

<sup>22</sup> Samuel W. Calhoun and Lucas E. Morel, "Abraham Lincoln's Religion: The Case for his Ultimate Belief in a Personal, Sovereign God," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, 33, no. 1 (2012): 39.

#### 7.4. The place of the Bible in the Address

The Address commenced with a paragraph that furnished a succinct report of the prosecution of the War.<sup>23</sup> In his second brief paragraph Lincoln assigned blame for the outbreak of the War squarely upon the Confederacy.<sup>24</sup> Lincoln then launched into the longest paragraph in the Address, followed by a short concluding section. These final two sections are universally accepted as containing more material from the Bible, than any speech by any other American President.

In his third paragraph Lincoln spoke of both parties in the conflict, with the phrase “Both read the same Bible.”<sup>25</sup> White offers the following analysis of Lincoln’s engagement with the Bible in the Address: “Lincoln mentioned God fourteen times, quoted the Bible four times, invoked prayer three times.”<sup>26</sup> These statistics are in stark contrast to Lincoln’s predecessors. The simple fact is that in the eighteen Inaugural Addresses that preceded Lincoln’s, there was one solitary biblical quotation. On Friday 4<sup>th</sup> March 1825 John Quincy Adams included the following biblical quotation in his address: “Except the Lord Keep the city the watchman waketh but in vain.”<sup>27</sup> This is a direct quotation of the final portion of Psalm 127:1. The frequent claim of historians that Lincoln employed the Bible because the times demanded it of him is factually incorrect. The extent of Lincoln’s use of the Bible on this occasion was unprecedented. The material that requires specific examination is contained in Lincoln’s final two paragraphs and necessitates an extended quotation.

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

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<sup>23</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8. 332.

<sup>24</sup> “Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would *make* war rather let the nation survive; and the other would *accept* war rather than let it perish. And the war came.” Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 333.

<sup>26</sup> White, *Lincoln*, Location 11558.

<sup>27</sup> McPherson, *To the Best of My Ability*, 333.

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!" 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."<sup>28</sup>

The case has already been made that the majority of Lincoln's audience would have possessed at least a measure of awareness of the Bible. An indication of the religious climate of the USA at this time is furnished by Edward Dicey, a British commentator, who recorded that Civil War era Church attendance in New York City was "larger in the proportion to the population than it would be in London."<sup>29</sup>

#### **7.4.1. Both read the same Bible**

Lincoln spoke of the damage that chattel slavery had caused to the Republic. He then reflected upon the dichotomy of two Christian factions who read the same Bible, then both proceeded in prayer to the same God, that he might grant them victory over the

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<sup>28</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol.8. 332-333.

<sup>29</sup> Herbert Carp and Edward Dicey, eds. *Spectator of America* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books Inc., 1971), 254.

other. Wolf reflected upon the fact that Lincoln's message in this Address contained the overriding theme that God alone "would have the final word in the dilemma of the two contestants at prayer."<sup>30</sup> The point will be made in this chapter that partisan and vitriolic rhetoric was somewhat popular during the War. There were, however, some sober reflections on the irony of the role of active Christians in the conflict. Reverend J.H. Hickok who included these words in an 1862 sermon furnishes an example: "In this suicidal strife, both sides have made special appeal to heaven... They are not only fighting against each other, they are praying against each other."<sup>31</sup> Guarneri notes that Lincoln appeared to possess a slight detachment, which allowed him clarity of vision and enabled him to align himself with those who "saw the terrible irony of a war between Christian believers."<sup>32</sup> Lincoln did not have a problem with people praying for divine intervention in the affairs of the Republic,<sup>33</sup> as Rable reflects that the Address revealed that Lincoln believed in "a God deeply invested in the fate of nations and individuals."<sup>34</sup> What troubled Lincoln was what he considered the blatant hypocrisy of the South.

Lincoln wrestled with the fact that the Southern people had prayed for God to help them to preserve the institution of slavery: "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."<sup>35</sup> Lincoln does not simply say 'God'; he declared a 'just God.' Indeed, the fact that God is a 'just God' resonates throughout both Old and New Testaments.<sup>36</sup> In assailing this injustice Lincoln evoked imagery from the earliest pages of the Bible. God cursed Adam declaring, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground" (Genesis 3:19). Lincoln's shared language regarding bread and the sweat of the face, point to the suggestion this fulfils the criteria for a strong biblical paraphrase.<sup>37</sup> Lincoln deftly connected slavery with the concept of Divine curse, and also introduced a sense of gross injustice, in which a

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<sup>30</sup> Wolf, "Lincoln and the Bible," 12.

<sup>31</sup> M.J. Hickok, *Mission of Calamity: A Thanksgiving Sermon, Preached in the First Methodist Episcopal Church, Scranton PA* (New York: John F. Trow and Co., 1862), 7.

<sup>32</sup> C.J. Guarneri, "While God is Marching on: The Religious World of Civil War Soldiers," *The Journal of American History* 89, no. 3 (2002).

<sup>33</sup> Lincoln's treatment of the Will of God and his exhortations to intercessory prayer, are discussed in Section 6.5 of this thesis.

<sup>34</sup> Rable, *Almost Chosen People*, 8.

<sup>35</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8. 333.

<sup>36</sup> Examples of this are found in Deuteronomy 32:4 and Isaiah 45:21.

<sup>37</sup> Section 1.6.2. of this thesis cited the work of Nicole who refers to the practice of paraphrasing, in which the author performs "slight modifications" to the original text in order to make a point. Nicole, "New Testament Use," 146.

slave produced bread under the conditions of the Adamic curse, but was then forbidden from eating it himself.

It is important to note that the both pro-slavery and abolitionists had claimed the Bible as support for their respective causes for some considerable time. Lincoln would certainly have heard speech and sermons, and read newspaper articles containing such arguments. Indeed as early as the year 1700 a Boston lawyer Samuel Sewall presented “a biblical case for emancipation.”<sup>38</sup> The writing, preaching and campaigning of Lewis Tappan and William Lloyd Garrison had stimulated the debate to present a case against slavery, based upon the Bible.<sup>39</sup> It has already been stated that Lincoln admired the preaching of Henry Ward Beecher. Lincoln planned his 1860 visit to New York in such a way as to enable him to make two visits to Brooklyn to hear Beecher speak.<sup>40</sup> For fifteen years before the war Beecher had “built a national reputation by attacking the ‘peculiar institution’ of slavery, calling for its abolition in the pulpit, on the public platform, and in newspaper columns.”<sup>41</sup> Lincoln was clearly aware of, and possibly influenced by some of the persuasive arguments of the day. However the majority of northern preachers built their case against slavery by concentrating on some of the Moses narratives, and making a case that many of the Old Testament references that did not condemn slavery were not relevant to the Antebellum. Holifield cites the example of Francis Wayland who contended:

God intended many of his commands for a particular people at a particular time. Nineteenth-Century Christians, for instance, had no right to destroy Canaanites even though God had commanded ancient Isreal to slay its enemies.<sup>42</sup>

It is important to note that Lincoln’s possible paraphrase from Genesis was not typical of the texts favoured by Abolitionist rhetoric of the day. It is feasible to submit that Lincoln allowed his own knowledge and understanding of the Bible to shape his remark on this occasion.

Lincoln gives the impression that he considered that the religious institutions of both North and South were in a sense flawed, as they both prayed unanswerable

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<sup>38</sup> Holifield, *Theology in America*, 495.

<sup>39</sup> Applegate, *Famous Man in America*, Location 4688.

<sup>40</sup> Holzer, *Lincoln at Cooper Union*, 202.

<sup>41</sup> Applegate, *Famous Man in America* Location 155.

<sup>42</sup> Holifield, *Theology in America*, 500.

prayers, without understanding the will of God for the nation.<sup>43</sup> It was something of a mystery to the President that the South, equipped as it was with the Bible, could still perceive slavery as a just and acceptable institution.

#### **7.4.2. The issue of judgement**

Lincoln employed the theme of Judgement, both human and divine, in the delivery of his Second Inaugural Address.

##### **7.4.2.1. The judgement of men**

Lincoln stated his case against the South with noticeable punctiliousness and then immediately withdrew from the language of condemnation, and cautioned, “judge not that we be not judged.”<sup>44</sup> These words are strikingly similar to the words of Jesus. Luke<sup>45</sup> offered an almost identical construction, but the Lincoln text bore greater similarity to Matthew 7:1: “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” Lincoln did not frame these words in quotation marks, and he substituted ‘we’ for ‘ye.’ It has been expressed that the possibility of a direct quotation is strengthened by an introductory remark, a textual citation, and quotation marks; all of which are absent in this instance.<sup>46</sup> However the almost exact similarity of Lincoln’s language to that of the Bible suggests he is employing a paraphrase. Tate explains that a paraphrase “tries to capture the sense of the original text, opting for clarity rather than fidelity.”<sup>47</sup> Lincoln’s use of this verse would appear to be consistent with the meaning of the command of Jesus not to pass judgement on others.

The rather gracious tone that Lincoln unexpectedly adopted, in the employment of this paraphrase could be argued to suggest he was influenced in some measure by the teaching of Jesus in this matter. The *Ostervald Bible’s* commentary notes reveal that the youthful Lincoln’s reading would have acquainted him with this warning against a judgemental attitude towards an enemy: “not to judge rashly of our neighbour nor to blame him too great severity; to acknowledge our own faults, and

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<sup>43</sup> “The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully.” Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8. 333.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> It is unlikely that Luke is the primary source for Lincoln’s quotation. Luke 6:37 says “Judge not, and ye shall not be judged.” Although this is very similar, Lincoln’s words almost mirror Matthew’s rendition.

<sup>46</sup> Steyn, *Extent and Diversity*, 2; Leonard, “Inner-Biblical Allusions,” 242.

<sup>47</sup> Tate, *Handbook to Biblical Interpretation*, Location 12773.

amend them, rather than pry to curiously into and reprove the faults of others.”<sup>48</sup> A case can be made, on this occasion, that Lincoln had every right to judge the actions of the Confederacy, if only for the evils of the perpetuation of the slave trade. The continuation of slavery in the United States was almost exclusively the doing of the Southern States, who aggressively pursued not only the institution’s survival, but also its extension into new territories. In order to comprehend something of the mind-set of Lincoln’s audience, it is important to note that although the Confederacy faced imminent military defeat, there was still no tangible evidence that the Southern authorities seriously considered surrender. Indeed, there was no significant sign that the South was at all repentant, and the evidence suggested that they intended to fight on as long as was possible.

In the first weeks of 1865 Davis was still speaking to the Confederate Congress about the South’s need to remain “as erect and defiant as ever.”<sup>49</sup> This defiance was not merely political; General Lee had personally witnessed the physical cost of the War, and yet his surrender only came at Grant’s initiation. It was 5.00pm on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1865 that Grant composed a letter urging Lee to surrender.<sup>50</sup> He wrote of the futility of the Confederate cause, and stated that capitulation would avoid “further effusion of blood.”<sup>51</sup> Although Lee realised the desperation of his circumstance, his reply lacked the humility of a defeated commander. He actually requested that Grant furnish terms before he would consider surrender.<sup>52</sup> Lee began with a note of defiance:

General: I have received your note of this date. Though not entertaining the opinion you express of the hopelessness of further resistance on the part of the Army of Northern Virginia.<sup>53</sup>

Lee duly received Grant’s generous terms.<sup>54</sup> Lee summoned his commanders and, rather than surrendering, the decision was taken to launch another offensive, which

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<sup>48</sup> Commentary notes on Matthew 7:1. *The Ostervald Bible*.

<sup>49</sup> Harry J. Maihafer, *War of Words: Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War Press* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books Inc., 2001) Kindle edition, Location 4083.

<sup>50</sup> Edward G. Longacre, *General Ulysses S. Grant: The Soldier and the Man* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2007), 266.

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/appomatox.htm> "Surrender at Appomattox," accessed 31<sup>st</sup> December 2011.

<sup>52</sup> Brian H. Reid, *Robert E. Lee: Icon for a Nation* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), 235.

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/appomatox.htm>, accessed 31<sup>st</sup> December 2011.

<sup>54</sup> Emory M. Thomas, *Robert E. Lee: A Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997), 361.



was repulsed.<sup>55</sup> Upon hearing the report of the failed action Lee said, “Then there is nothing left me but to go and see General Grant, and I would rather die a thousand deaths.”<sup>56</sup> Lee reluctantly, but graciously surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Court House on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1865.<sup>57</sup> The will of the Confederacy’s civil and military authorities was to continue hostilities. When Lee returned to his defeated army after surrendering, a Confederate soldier said, “Farewell, General Lee. I wish for your sake and mine that every damned Yankee on earth was sunk ten miles in hell!”<sup>58</sup> The passion of the Confederacy for their cause and their determination to continue with the War rendered Lincoln’s remarks even more magnanimous.

It is the contention of this thesis that whatever the exact details of Lincoln’s personal faith may have been, he did possess a belief in the Bible as a source of authoritative wisdom. There were key moments in the delivery of important political points that he appeared to crown his arguments with recourse to that exalted authority. The appraisal of many historians is that Lincoln’s use of the Bible was simply as a linguistic tool, but Braden is correct in commenting that in this address his “tightly constructed sentences drew much from the Scriptures for language and authority.”<sup>59</sup> While it is certainly the case that Lincoln did employ the Bible as a linguistic resource, he was not merely retreating to the familiar language and cadences of the King James Bible. It is distinctly possible that he was also appealing to its authority. Lincoln was merciful and encouraged mercy be made available for the soon to be defeated Confederacy; not because their actions necessarily deserved it, but as Glen Thurow expressed, “an exact justice is to be left to God alone.”<sup>60</sup> In light of the strength of public feeling it would have been more difficult for Lincoln to speak in this conciliatory tone without the influence and authority of the Bible.

To Lincoln’s audience this was a surprising note, a conciliatory tone, which was somewhat inconsistent with other powerful contemporary rhetoric. Miller’s assessment is worthy of extended quotation:

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 361-362.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 362.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 363-366.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 366.

<sup>59</sup> Braden, *Abraham Lincoln*, 92.

<sup>60</sup> Glen E. Thurow, "Lincoln and American Political Religion," in *The Historian's Lincoln: Pseudo History, Psychohistory, and History*, eds. Gabor S. Boritt, and Norman O. Forness (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 139.

No one would have been surprised if the President of the United States, nearing the end of this bloody, religion-drenched war, had in his address claimed that the impending victory showed that God was on the side of the Union. But –astonishingly – he did not do this; he said something that almost contradicts it; the almighty has His own purposes, beyond those of either side.<sup>61</sup>

Harris notes that Lincoln’s audience did not hear the speech that they expected. Indeed, he suggests that a much more upbeat vitriolic address would herald the imminent victorious conclusion of the War.<sup>62</sup> The Northern citizens were livid with the Confederacy for causing this costly war. The mood is sampled in the words of Lincoln’s contemporaries. His confidant Browning believed that “God is entering into judgement with the cotton states,” and continued to remind Lincoln that the Union cause was “as holy... as ever engaged men’s feelings.”<sup>63</sup>

Such was the strength and extent of Northern anger that even preachers adopted distinctly vengeful tones. Noll offers quotation from a sermon delivered by a Connecticut minister soon after Lincoln’s Address: “Yes vengeance belongs to the Lord ... He will not allow this land to be polluted with the innocent blood un-avenged, shed by these Rebels. We must wipe it out.”<sup>64</sup> Henry Ward Beecher was invited to address the ceremony to raise the Union Flag in Fort Sumter.<sup>65</sup> Beecher declared blame for the War’s carnage belonged entirely to the South,<sup>66</sup> stating that

A day will come when God will reveal judgement... And, then, these guiltiest and most remorseless of traitors ... that have drenched a continent in needless blood ... shall be whirled aloft and plunged downward forever and forever in an endless retribution.<sup>67</sup>

Noll examined Lincoln’s use of Jesus’ words on the perils of judging<sup>68</sup> in light of the thinking of some popular American theologians of Lincoln’s day, and offered this assessment: “In volumes of learned, scripturally laden prose, none said anything that

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<sup>61</sup> Miller, *President Lincoln*, 406.

<sup>62</sup> Harris, *Lincoln’s Last Months*, 140-141.

<sup>63</sup> Carwardine, *Purpose and Power*, Location 4627.

<sup>64</sup> Noll, *America’s God*, 427.

<sup>65</sup> Craig L. Symonds, *The Civil War at Sea* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2009), 146.

<sup>66</sup> “I charge the whole guilt of this war upon the ambitious, educated, plotting, political leaders of the South. They have shed this ocean of blood.” Noll, *America’s God*, 428.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Lincoln used this phrase, “but let us judge not that we be not judged.” Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8. 333.

approached the sagacity of Lincoln's moral commentary in the Second Inaugural."<sup>69</sup> Rable also notes Lincoln's unexpected tone: "once again Lincoln cut against the grain of public expectations and popular theology."<sup>70</sup>

It is important to understand that Lincoln did harbour deep misgivings about the ideology and values of the Confederacy. Indeed, his dexterous understanding of the Bible could be said to have partly aggravated this. Ten months before the Address he wrote to the committee representing a delegation of Baptists. In this document Lincoln's primary concern was to thank the committee for their members' support in the struggle to defeat the Confederacy and the achievement of full emancipation.<sup>71</sup> Speaking of the Christian support for the struggle, he declared "it is difficult to conceive how it could be otherwise with anyone professing Christianity."<sup>72</sup> Lincoln then proceeded to expound his objection to the Southern pro-slavery position. Lincoln's text is of such relevance to this section, and the thesis in general, that an extended quotation is required.

To read the Bible, as the word of God himself, that 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread' and to preach there-from that, 'In the sweat of other mans faces shalt thou eat bread,' to my mind can scarcely be reconciled with honest sincerity. When brought to my final reckoning, may I have to answer for robbing no man of his goods; yet more tolerable even than this, than for robbing one of himself, and that was his. When, a year or two ago, those professedly holy men of the South, met in the semblance of prayer and devotion, and, in the name of Him who said 'As ye would all men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them' appealed to the Christian world to aid them in doing to a whole race of men, as they would have no man do unto themselves, to my thinking, they contemned and insulted God and His church, far more than did Satan when he tempted the Saviour with the Kingdoms of the earth. The devils attempt was no more false, and far less hypocritical. But let me forbear, remembering it is also written 'Judge not, lest ye be judged.'<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Noll, *America's God*, 430.

<sup>70</sup> Rable, *Almost Chosen People*, 372.

<sup>71</sup> "I can only thank you for thus adding to the effective and almost unanimous support which the Christian communities are so zealously giving to the country, and to liberty." To George B. Idle, James R. Doolittle, and A. Hubbell, 30<sup>th</sup> May 1864. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7. 368.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

Another example of the lack of sympathy that Lincoln had for religious Southerners who defended the Confederate cause is an account given to Brooks, in which Lincoln was petitioned to order the release of two prisoners of war. Lincoln responded to the claims regarding the petitioner's husband's piety with the following rebuttal:

You say your husband is a religious man; tell him when you meet him, that I say I am not much of a judge of religion, but that, in my opinion, the religion that sets men to rebel and fight against their government, because as they think, that government does not sufficiently help some men to eat their bread on the sweat of other men's faces, is not the sort of religion upon which people can get to heaven.<sup>74</sup>

The Address' conclusion contained a note of humility. He stated that correct human judgement was only possibly with God's help: "with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right."<sup>75</sup> Lincoln's thinking was not formed exclusively for this Address; a letter written six months before his delivery illustrated his feelings on the matter: "Meanwhile we must work earnestly in the best light He gives us, trusting that so working still conduces to the great end he ordains."<sup>76</sup> Lincoln was not a preacher of the Christian faith, but in his political career it is not unreasonable to suggest that he considered the message and wisdom of the Bible to be of value in discovering 'the right' in the weightier matters of national government and destiny.

#### **7.4.2.2. God's judgement**

Lincoln manoeuvred his Address into a profoundly important moment. He sought to ascribe meaning to the War. He stated "Woe unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"<sup>77</sup> Lincoln presented these words within quotation marks, and Lincoln's introduction with the words "The Almighty has his own purposes" appears to comply

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<sup>74</sup> Story written for Noah Brooks, 6<sup>th</sup> December 1864. *Ibid.*, Vol. 8. 155.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.

<sup>76</sup> Letter to Mrs Eliza P. Gurney, 4<sup>th</sup> September 1864. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7. 535.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 8. 333.

with Beale's criteria.<sup>78</sup> On this occasion Lincoln presented a direct quotation from Matthew 18:7.<sup>79</sup> For his immediate purposes Lincoln was content to expound the text at face value. He adopted the somewhat philosophical approach that 'offences' would come, and that American slavery was such an offence.<sup>80</sup> The audience might have been forgiven for assuming that the "woe to that man by whom the offence cometh"<sup>81</sup> was a reference to the guilt of the Confederacy. However, White points out the grandeur of Lincoln's thinking, by highlighting his phrase 'American slavery,' used instead of 'Southern slavery.' "By saying *American slavery*, Lincoln asserted that North and South must together own the offense."<sup>82</sup> The history of North American chattel slavery is not the topic of this thesis, but it is important to mention that although the Southern States were the centre of the slave trade, and largely responsible for its perpetuation, the North had been complicit to the extent that slavery still existed in Washington DC at the commencement of the War. Harris states that this use of a verse from the Bible enabled him to establish "the whole country's guilt for slavery."<sup>83</sup>

The issues of slavery and emancipation were by no means polarised along the national sectional divide, with many in the North not in favour of emancipation. The majority in the North did not agree with slavery, but neither did they favour racial equality. Litwack stated "most northern whites would maintain a careful distinction between granting Negroes legal protection... and political and social equality."<sup>84</sup>

Lincoln further contested that in both North and South there existed "that long and firmly held conviction that the African race was inferior and therefore incapable of being assimilated politically."<sup>85</sup> It is also important to recall the fact that the Northern States only embraced the War to preserve the Union, not as a military solution to end slavery.<sup>86</sup> Grimsley cited the editorial of an October 1861 edition of

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<sup>78</sup> Beale states that the case for a direct quotation is strengthened by the presence of an introductory prefix. Beale, *Handbook*, Location 741.

<sup>79</sup> The Gospel of Luke 17:1, contains a very similar wording rendered, "It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!" The fact that Lincoln's wording is exactly the same as Matthew, suggests that the first Gospel was Lincoln's source.

<sup>80</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8. 333.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 332.

<sup>82</sup> White, *Lincoln's Greatest Speech*, 145.

<sup>83</sup> Harris, *Lincoln's Last Months*, 119.

<sup>84</sup> Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States 1790-1860* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1961. Reprint, 1992), 15.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> "The federal government had therefore begun the war with a political commitment to defeat the south without touching slavery. Most northerners considered that prudent." Mark Grimsley, *The Hard*

the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, which “summarised the prevailing view when it rallied against the ‘insane folly’ of the abolitionists.”<sup>87</sup> The *Advertiser* made reference to the other aggressive attempts at pursuing an uncompromising abolitionist agenda, which subsequently produced a renewed “Southern intransigence.”<sup>88</sup> The *Advertiser* expressed the prevailing view that “The same folly is now repeated by those who urge the conversion of this war into a war for emancipation.”<sup>89</sup> This fact is illustrated by the content of some Democrat campaign literature that was distributed during the 1864 Presidential race. Weber cites a pamphlet that devoted itself to the considerable fear of miscegenation, which it maintained was “part of the original purpose of the abolitionists.”<sup>90</sup> These open attacks on Lincoln’s efforts to end American slavery even produced campaign songs; again, Weber quotes the following lyrics,

*Abe, Seward and Greeley, Chase, Beecher and Co.; Made very loud pretensions, to freedom you know; ‘Free men’ and ‘Free speech,’ ‘Free homes,’ were their cry! And now for every BLACK MAN freed twenty WHITE MEN die.*<sup>91</sup>

This sentiment was not the exclusive preserve of the ignorant mob alone. Former Secretary of State, and Attorney General, Jeremiah S. Black is quoted by Weber: “to rob the white man of his property and bestow it on the negro... you can degrade the white man to the level of the negro – that is easily done – but you cannot lift the negro up to the white man’s place.”<sup>92</sup> The *New York Daily Tribune* openly described Lincoln’s Democratic opponent McClellan as “the true and rightful Pro-slavery candidate for President.”<sup>93</sup>

Indeed, the Northern populace against slavery was often far from egalitarian. A quotation offered by Scottish author George Mackay, who observed the prevailing attitude of the North on his travels, furnished a reasonable précis:

We shall not make the black man a slave; we shall not buy him or sell him; but we shall not associate with him. He shall be free to live, and thrive, if he can, and to pay taxes and perform duties; but he shall not be free to dine

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*Hand of War: Upon Military Policy Towards Southern Civilians 1861-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Reprint, 1997), 121.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Weber, *Copperheads*, 185.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>93</sup> Waugh, *Re-electing Lincoln*, 30.

and drink at our board – to share with us the deliberations of the jury-box – to sit upon the seat of judgement, however capable he may be – to plead in our courts – to represent us in the legislature – to attend us at the bed of sickness and pain – and to mingle with us in the concert room, the lecture room, the theatre, or the church, or to marry with our daughters. We are of another race, and he is inferior. Let him know his place and keep it.”<sup>94</sup> Mackay summarized that, “This is the prevalent feeling, if not the language of the free North.”<sup>95</sup>

Although Lincoln won a convincing victory over McClellan, and by implication, these sentiments, it is still noteworthy that such opinions existed in the North in considerable proliferation.

Lincoln had sought to use Matthew’s text to help shape national thinking on the issue of the sin of slavery. Having established corporate complicity, Lincoln then offered the suggestion that the ‘woe’ that was due to one ‘by whom the offence cometh,’ was indeed the War itself. Lincoln suggested the possibility that the War was God’s judgement for the sin of slavery: “and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offenses came.”<sup>96</sup> He eventually completed this point with the penetrating prognosis that God might allow the War to continue until all the wealth accrued by slavery was cancelled out, or “until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword.”<sup>97</sup> Wolf reflected upon the gravity of this assessment: “Lincoln understood the tragedy and suffering of the Civil War as God’s judgement upon this evil and as punishment to bring about its removal. The judgement fell upon both sides.”<sup>98</sup> Striner correctly observes that, “Lincoln was able to look so unflinchingly at human evil and call it evil.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Charles Mackay, *Life and Liberty in America or Sketches of a Tour in the United States and Canada in 1857-8*. Vol. 2 (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1859), 41-42.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>96</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8. 333.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Wolf also made the following observation, “In the severe language of Scripture, Lincoln held the nation under judgement.” Wolf, “Lincoln and the Bible,” 11.

<sup>99</sup> Richard Striner, *Lincoln’s Way: How Six Great Presidents Created American Power* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2010. Reprint, 2012), 42.

It is interesting to note the indications that Lincoln's thinking was developing over a period of time. Eleven months before he delivered the Address, Lincoln wrote to Hodges,<sup>100</sup> and expressed the following thoughts.

Now at the end of three years struggle the nations condition is not what either party, or any man devised, or expected. God alone can claim it ... If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and will also that we of the North as well as you of the South, shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein new cause to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God.<sup>101</sup>

During September 1864 Lincoln wrote to Mrs Gurney with an expression of thanks and admiration for her spiritual influence.<sup>102</sup> Lincoln reflected upon the War in a way that somewhat reflected what would be expressed in the Address. He wrestled again with the issue of the War's connection to the will of God, and almost marvelled at the gulf between human and divine wisdom. The importance of this piece warrants slightly extended quotation:

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 earnestly in the best light He gives, 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.<sup>103</sup>

One of the obvious concerns for Lincoln was not simply the War, or the large casualties resulting from horrific battles. Lincoln also appeared to be wrestling with the question of the duration of the conflict, namely why God appeared to will such an extended confrontation. The concept of the War being in some sense the will of God,

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<sup>100</sup> Albert G. Hodges was the editor of the *Frankfort Kentucky Commonwealth*. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7. 282, Annotation 1.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

<sup>102</sup> "I have not forgotten – probably never shall forget - the very impressive occasion when yourself and friends visited me on a Sabbath forenoon two years ago. Nor has your kind letter written nearly a year later, ever been forgotten. In all it has been your purpose to strengthen my reliance on God. I am much indebted to the good Christian people of the country for their constant prayers and consolations; and to no one of them, more than yourself." To Eliza P. Gurney, 4<sup>th</sup> September 1864. *Ibid.*, 535.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*



as his means of exacting judgement upon the nation for the sin of slavery, was clearly developing in the President's mind.

Modern scholars have scrutinized Lincoln's language, which has produced some interesting and imaginative contributions. The idea that Lincoln allowed the Bible to shape his thinking on the possibility of Divine Judgement has already been addressed. One suggestion is that Lincoln did not actually believe that the War was God's judgement upon the sin of slavery. One theory is that Lincoln never actually intended his 'judgement' material to be received as his own opinion; rather he offered it as a conceptual possibility of that which may have been the case. Oates suggests that Lincoln "contended that God perhaps has willed the war."<sup>104</sup> Kaplan also applies himself to this aspect of Lincoln's language, describing it as merely "a hypothesis"<sup>105</sup>, while Goodwin,<sup>106</sup> Burlingame<sup>107</sup> and McPherson<sup>108</sup> present Lincoln as simply 'offering' and 'suggesting' theological possibilities. Calhoun and Morel point out that the immediate context for Lincoln's remarks on judgement: "The Almighty has His own purposes."<sup>109</sup> They suggest the following explanation: "Lincoln hypothesized to demonstrate an appropriate human humility before God."<sup>110</sup> The notion that Lincoln would use arguably the most important speech of his career to simply speculate on the hypothetical possibility of Divine judgement is somewhat unlikely. Lincoln's speeches were usually intensely practical in their application; indeed, aspects of this research have sought to demonstrate that Lincoln was able to apply the Bible to contemporary circumstances. The suggestion that Lincoln was using this pivotal moment in the War for hypothesis would be inconsistent with his previous deliveries.

Another fascinating aspect of recent treatment of the Address submits the possibility that Lincoln employed the language and message of the Bible in order to avoid being blamed for the War. Donald submitted the idea that Lincoln's treatment of the War, as God's judgement, was expressed in order to lift "his own responsibility for the conflict. If there was guilt, the burden had been shifted from his shoulders to those of a higher power."<sup>111</sup> Fehrenbacher is also a source of such thinking; he

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<sup>104</sup> Oates, *Malice Toward None*, 118.

<sup>105</sup> Kaplan, *Biography of a Writer*, 354.

<sup>106</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 699.

<sup>107</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 2*. 768.

<sup>108</sup> McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln*, 59.

<sup>109</sup> Calhoun and Morel, "Lincoln's Religion," 41.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 566.

proposed that Lincoln used the Bible to “absolve himself from ultimate responsibility” for the terrible effects, and cost, of the War.<sup>112</sup> The logic of this argument is interesting because if, in a religious culture, the weight of public opinion placed blame for the War upon the shoulders of their political leaders, then a tactic of deflection would emerge as an appealing option. However, the truth of the matter is that the general weight of Northern public opinion in 1865 did not hold Lincoln responsible for the War. In fact, the rhetoric of the North firmly placed the blame for the carnage upon the Confederacy. It is also noteworthy that contemporary and historical opinion rarely accused Lincoln of sidestepping responsibility in his political dealings. Indeed, the concluding remarks from his 1862 Annual Message suggest that Lincoln was not afraid of accepting the responsibility of high office: “We know how to save the Union. The world knows we do know how to save it. We – even we here – hold the power and bear the responsibility.”<sup>113</sup>

The Address sought to facilitate the philosophical foundation for a worthwhile reconstruction of the Union, which would commence with a magnanimous attitude to the impending military victory. However, Thurow is correct in his assessment that “it is Lincoln’s speculation on the meaning of the Civil War which is of utmost significance.”<sup>114</sup> Lincoln was a politician, and although he knew the Bible extremely well, he had very little exposure to the work of theologians. It does appear to be the case that he developed an increasing ability to understand something of the theological implications of the War. Noll is impressed with the fact that Lincoln, “who only read a little theology could, on occasion, give expression to profound theological interpretations of the war between the States.”<sup>115</sup> Blight offers the following observation on the Address: “in rhetoric so unusual for Presidential Inaugurals, Lincoln assumed the prophet’s mantle.”<sup>116</sup> There was indeed an almost prophetic tone to Lincoln’s observations, although Lincoln would never have ascribed himself such nobility.

It is poignant to notice the uniqueness of Lincoln’s Address regarding the issue of the possibility of the nation experiencing divine judgement. In his First Inaugural Address, Lincoln drew his conclusion with this sentence: “Intelligence,

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<sup>112</sup> Fehrenbacher, *Lincoln in Text*, 163.

<sup>113</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, 537.

<sup>114</sup> Thurow, “Lincoln and American Political Religion,” 135.

<sup>115</sup> Noll, *America’s God*, 426.

<sup>116</sup> Mary B. Norton et al., *A People and Nation: Ninth Edition*. Vol. 1 (Boston: Elm Street Publishing, 2008), 423.

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.”<sup>117</sup> Lincoln’s description of the United States as a ‘favored land’ appears to be the preserve of the Presidency. The idea that the American Republic was a blessed land both preceded and followed Lincoln’s tenure. Examples of such are found in the Inaugural Addresses of Presidents of W.H. Harrison,<sup>118</sup> T. Roosevelt,<sup>119</sup> F.D. Roosevelt<sup>120</sup> and W.J. Clinton.<sup>121</sup> The majority of American Presidents have sought to express to their electorate that God’s blessing would rest upon the nation. Indeed, sixteen of the eighteen Inaugural Addresses<sup>122</sup> which preceded Lincoln’s Second concluded with an appeal for God’s blessing upon America.<sup>123</sup> Metcalf correctly observes “no president before or since has offered the opinion that instead of being blessed by God, our country may justly become the objective of divine wrath.”<sup>124</sup> Lincoln became the only President to date who stood to propose the possibility that the Republic had experienced something of a Divine visitation for judgement. In this thesis, the point has been reinforced that Lincoln was rather adroit on occasions when

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<sup>117</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. 271.

<sup>118</sup> William Henry Harrison delivered these words as part of his Inaugural Address, 4<sup>th</sup> March 1841, “and to that good being who has blessed us by the gifts of civil and religious freedom, who watched over and prospered the labors of our fathers and has hitherto preserved to us institutions far exceeding in excellence those of any other people, let us unite in fervently commending every interest of our beloved country in all future time.” McPherson, *To the Best of My Ability*, 348.

<sup>119</sup> Theodore Roosevelt began his Inaugural Address with this sentence, on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 1905, “No people on earth have more cause to be thankful than ours, and this is said reverently, in no spirit of boastfulness in our own strength, but with gratitude to the Giver of Good who has blessed us with the conditions which have enabled us to achieve so large a measure of well-being and of happiness.” *Ibid.*, 394.

<sup>120</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered these words in his Fourth Inaugural Address, 20<sup>th</sup> January 1945, “The Almighty has blessed our land in many ways. He has given our people stout hearts and strong arms with which to strike blows for freedom and truth. He has given to our country a faith which has become the hope of all peoples in an anguished world.” *Ibid.*, 422.

<sup>121</sup> William J. Clinton delivered these words at the conclusion of his Second Inaugural Address, 20<sup>th</sup> January 1997, “Yes, let us build our bridge, a bridge wide enough and strong enough for every American to cross over to a blessed land of new promise.” He concluded, “May God strengthen our hands for the good work ahead, and always, always bless our America.” *Ibid.*, 455.

<sup>122</sup> There are two Inaugural Addresses, which did not end with an invocation for Divine blessing. George Washington’s Second Inaugural Address (Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March 1793) comprised only 126 words. It read almost as an introduction to the recitation of the Presidential Oath, rather than a statement of policy. The Second Inaugural Address of James Madison (Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> March 1813) does not end with any statement regarding God’s blessing upon the nation. *Ibid.*, 312 and 323.

<sup>123</sup> There were eighteen Presidential Inaugural Addresses that preceded Lincoln’s administration, from George Washington’s First (Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> April 1789) to James Buchanan (Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 1857). The terms in which God’s blessing was either declared or invoked were sometimes elaborate, or in the case of Thomas Jefferson, somewhat vague. In his First Address Jefferson said, “And may that Infinite Power which rules the destinies of the universe lead our councils ... and give them a favorable issue for your peace and prosperity.” *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>124</sup> Metcalf, *Presidential Voices*, 28.

he engaged with the Bible. In the case of this Address, Lincoln demonstrated that he was also courageous in his use of the Bible.

Barton considered that there was something of the prophet about Lincoln: “His Second Inaugural was itself a kind of leaf out of the books of the prophets.”<sup>125</sup> Fox expanded this thought by noting that the Old Testament prophets had one common function, which was to speak against Israel’s sins.<sup>126</sup> In reference to Lincoln’s treatment of the War as God’s judgement, Fox asserted that as the prophets railed against Israel when she was in “violation of what they considered God’s statues and ordinances,”<sup>127</sup> so also, “Lincoln condemned his countrymen who were guilty.”<sup>128</sup>

The majority of Lincoln’s audience would have been personally affected by the War, yet he took the occasion to speak of the conflict as being the judgement of God for sin. In a letter regarding the Address, Lincoln reflected to Senator Weed, “Men are not flattered by being shown that there has been a difference of purpose between the Almighty and them.”<sup>129</sup> The suggestion offered by some historians that Lincoln quoted the Bible to gain favour with a largely Christian public is rather difficult to endorse in this light of evidence.

Lincoln concluded this section on judgement with a quotation from the Bible, which reminded his audience that God was in ultimate control. Lincoln declared, “as it was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said ‘the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether.’”<sup>130</sup> He offered a direct quotation from Psalm 19:9 “the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.” Once again, Lincoln was comfortable moving fluently between both Old and New Testaments. It is also important to note that, contrary to some scholarly thinking, this was not the language that betrayed the belief system of a Deist.<sup>131</sup> Lincoln referred to a God who chose to intervene and act within human history in order to “accomplish His objectives.”<sup>132</sup>

It has already been discussed that Lincoln was raised in a Calvinistic Baptist community.<sup>133</sup> It has been argued that there are visible traces of this heritage regarding God’s sovereignty in the concluding words of the Address: “with firmness

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<sup>125</sup> Barton, *Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, 262.

<sup>126</sup> Fox, *Faith Based Leadership*, 91.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Lincoln to Thurlow Weed, 15<sup>th</sup> March 1865. Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol.8. 356.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 333.

<sup>131</sup> The issue of Lincoln being a deist by persuasion was dealt with in Section 5.2 of this thesis.

<sup>132</sup> Calhoun and Morel, "Lincoln's Religion," 39.

<sup>133</sup> Lincoln upbringing in a Calvinistic Baptist home was introduced in Section 2.3.3.2 of this thesis.

in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in.”<sup>134</sup> Carwardine correctly observes that Lincoln’s presentation of God had “acquired a more Calvinist, conventional Protestant, appearance.”<sup>135</sup> Wolf offered this commentary: “If nothing else were known of Lincoln than his Second Inaugural Address, it would still be possible to demonstrate his creative reinterpretation of Calvinism.”<sup>136</sup> Lincoln also concluded with a plea for mercy towards the soon to be defeated Confederacy, “With malice towards none; with charity for all.”<sup>137</sup> Lincoln’s intention was to provide a platform of thinking that would make national reunion possible. In order to achieve this, Thurow correctly observed, “One had to combine justice with Charity.”<sup>138</sup>

Lincoln’s treatment of the War as possible visitation of Divine judgement also raised an issue, which aroused the interest of some noted historians. The idea of the War being ‘needless’ appeared in the work of revisionist historians during the 1930s and 1940s. The suggestion was that the War had been ‘unnecessary’<sup>139</sup>, and that the objectives of Union and abolitionists could have been achieved without recourse to civil war. Krannawitter furnishes a quotation which dramatically illustrates the revisionist stance: “The [Civil War] was the work of politicians and pious cranks!”<sup>140</sup> A recent example is DiLorenzo’s 2002 work, in which he states that Lincoln waged War primarily to vindicate his own political convictions.<sup>141</sup>

The purpose of this thesis is not to examine scholarly theory of the nature of the War. However, in the light of revisionist thinking, it is important to note Lincoln’s use of the Bible to explain the meaning of the war. The revisionist position requires the historian to accept the notion that a consideration portion of Lincoln’s text was calculated to divert attention from himself. In effect, he was evoking some of the Bible’s teaching on judgement to deflect attention from his own instigation of the War to vindicate his political philosophy. It has already been stated that although Lincoln

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<sup>134</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8. 333.

<sup>135</sup> Carwardine, *Purpose and Power*, 247.

<sup>136</sup> Wolf, "Lincoln and the Bible," 6.

<sup>137</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8. 333.

<sup>138</sup> Thurow, “Lincoln and American Political Religion,” 138.

<sup>139</sup> Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln*, 119.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> On the issue of the possible individual State’s right of secession, DiLorenzo stated that, “Lincoln’s insistence that no such right existed has no basis whatsoever in history of fact. He essentially invented a new theory – that the federal government created the states, which were therefore not sovereign – and waged the bloodiest war in world history up to that point to ‘prove’ himself right.” DiLorenzo, *The Real Lincoln*, 5.

was pragmatic and could even be ruthless in some of his decision making, his personal integrity was rarely questioned. In the varying scholastic treatments of this Address, even revisionists have stopped short of suggesting that Lincoln was being deliberately disingenuous. This therefore presents difficulties with a revisionist reading of the situation. Lincoln's thinking in the Address could not be described as ambiguous. In this Address he stated, in the most visible of contexts, that the War was part of the Divine purpose, which would not fully vindicate either party. It is difficult to hold to a solid revisionist position, without discarding the sincerity of Lincoln's considerable engagement with the Bible, to provide meaning to the tragedy of the War.

### **7.5. Reported reaction to the Address**

In order to gain an understanding of the relevance of Lincoln's use of the Bible in this Address, it will be useful to demonstrate the significance of the speech both immediately and in the realm of historical memory. A brief sample of reaction to the Address will be presented.

Lincoln's own assessment of his efforts was recorded eleven days<sup>142</sup> after the Inauguration in his letter to Senator Thurlow Weed: "I expect the latter to wear well as – perhaps better than – any thing I have produced; but I believe it is not immediately popular."<sup>143</sup>

There was a largely positive Northern reaction to the Address, although there was also the limited and inevitable detraction. Lincoln's decision to make extended quotations from the Bible drew the following response from Professor A.B. Bradford, who wondered, "When he knew it would be read by millions all over the world, why under the heavens did he not make it a little more creditable to American scholarship."<sup>144</sup> The *Boston Journal* attributed the power of the Address to Lincoln's use of the Bible. The *Journal* stated its editorial position that the engagement with the Bible is that which:

...commends it to the approval of the sober, earnest and thoughtful portion of the people - and not those alone who are professors of religion, but

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<sup>142</sup> On 15<sup>th</sup> March 1865 Lincoln responded to a letter of congratulation from Senator Weed, in which Weed described the Address as "...not only the neatest but the most pregnant and effective use to which the English language was ever put." Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8. 356.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> White, *Lincoln's Greatest Speech*, 183.

everyone who recognises the hand of God in dealing with nations as with individuals.<sup>145</sup>

*The Boston Transcript* offered the following assessment of Lincoln's inclusion of biblical content: "The president was lifted above the level upon which political rulers usually stand, and felt himself in the very of the very mystery of Providence."<sup>146</sup>

Frederick Douglass "sensed immediately the greatness of the Address."<sup>147</sup> When Douglass became the first African American to be invited to attend an Inaugural Reception at the Executive Mansion,<sup>148</sup> Lincoln asked Douglass for his assessment of his Address. He replied, "Mr Lincoln that was a sacred effort."<sup>149</sup> Douglass later reflected upon Lincoln's use of the Bible in the Address and recorded his view that "the address sounded more like a sermon than a state paper."<sup>150</sup> Reverend Lowry, in a collection of eulogies to Lincoln, offered this comment on the Address: "What State paper, in all our official literature, ever revealed such a sense of Divine justice, and sublime faith in God?"<sup>151</sup>

In England there was some diverse reaction to the Address, a substantial portion of which appeared to be positive. An example from *The Spectator* presented this endorsement of the Address: "the President's recent weighty Address, - by far the noblest which any American President has yet uttered."<sup>152</sup> This editorial also offered the following prediction regarding the speech's legacy, stating that Lincoln had "left behind him something of a sacred and prophetic character."<sup>153</sup> Bragg offers this quotation from theologian Philip Schaff:<sup>154</sup> "I do not believe that any royal, princely or republican state dreamt of recent times can be compared to this inaugural address for genuine Christian wisdom and gentleness."<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> This section from the *Boston Journal* is quoted in, Harris, *Lincoln's Last Months*, 149.

<sup>146</sup> *The Boston Evening Transcript*. 6<sup>th</sup> March, 1865.

<sup>147</sup> James Oakes, *The Radical and the Republican: Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, and the Triumph of Antislavery Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company 2008), 241.

<sup>148</sup> Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln*, 689.

<sup>149</sup> Oakes, *The Radical and the Republican*, 242.

<sup>150</sup> White, *Lincoln's Greatest Speech*, 184.

<sup>151</sup> Reverend Robert Lowry in, William R. Williams, ed. *Our Martyr President: Abraham Lincoln. Voices From the Pulpits of New York and Brooklyn* (New York: Tibbals and Whiting, 1865) Kindle edition, Location 4010.

<sup>152</sup> Mitgang, *A Press Portrait*, 447.

<sup>153</sup> Carpenter, *Six Months at the White House*, 31.

<sup>154</sup> Philip Schaff (1819-1893) was a protestant theologian and church historian, who had a special interest in the United States of America. George H. Shriver, *Philip Schaff: Christian Scholar and Ecumenical Prophet* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987. Reprint, 2003), 1.

<sup>155</sup> Bragg, *Book of Books*, 534.

When Lincoln was assassinated 41 days after delivering the Address,<sup>156</sup> his life and achievements became the subject of even greater scrutiny. Although for the most part the Address had been appreciated as a unique piece of statesmanship, after his death, its full impact upon American historical memory began to be realised.

## **7.6. A brief survey of historians' treatment of the Address**

Lincoln's Address has continued to spark discussion amongst each generation of historians. The nature of the Address, its context and the majesty of the language has invited critical analysis, which continues into the most recent of scholarship.

### **7.6.1. The Address as theology**

Noll is expression his appreciation of the theological maturity achieved in Lincoln's engagement with the Bible, in the Address:

His view of providence was distinctly theological. More than any other feature of this address, Lincoln's conception of God's rule over the world set him apart from the recognised theologians of his day.<sup>157</sup>

In her assessment of the Address Lois Einhorn considers that Lincoln's renown in American historical memory is due in considerable measure, to this address.

Ask Americans what Presidents were concomitantly skilled speakers, and almost certainly they will name Abraham Lincoln and submit as proof ...the Second Inaugural Address ... among the best Presidential orations ever delivered.<sup>158</sup>

Einhorn also expresses her assessment that Lincoln's treatment will of God and Judgement for the sin of slavery was a "theological explanation for the Civil War."<sup>159</sup>

Wolf commented, "The Second Inaugural Address reads like a supplement of the Bible. In it there are fourteen references to God, four direct quotations from Genesis, psalms, and Matthew."<sup>160</sup> He also reflected, and in a sense pre-empted, Noll's

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<sup>156</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/abrahamlincoln> "Abraham Lincoln 1861-1865," accessed 19th September 2010.

<sup>157</sup> Noll, *America's God*, 427.

<sup>158</sup> Lois J. Einhorn, "Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)," in *U.S. Presidents as Orators: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook*, ed. Halford R. Ryan (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995), 77.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>160</sup> Wolf, *Lincoln and the Bible*, 12-13.



thinking by suggesting “This document is one of the most astute pieces of theology ever written.”<sup>161</sup>

### **7.6.2. Historians’ treatment of Lincoln’s text**

This section will demonstrate that, despite universal acceptance of the importance this Address, the coverage is generally rather brief. The majority of scholastic opinion reflects varying degrees of acceptance that Lincoln’s thoughts were expressed in the context of the influence of the Bible upon his thinking. There are examples of historians who acknowledge Lincoln’s use of the Bible in the Second Inaugural Address while maintaining its irrelevance. In his 1893 publication, Remsburg acknowledged Lincoln’s use of the Bible, stating that although “He mentions God, and quotes from the Bible,”<sup>162</sup> Lincoln’s use of scripture presented no proof that he believed in the faith of the Bible, or considered it to be inspired by God.<sup>163</sup>

Doris Goodwin offers the following assessment of the Address: “More than any of his other speeches, the Second Inaugural fused spiritual faith with politics.”<sup>164</sup> Goodwin correctly acknowledges the centrality of Lincoln’s engagement with the Bible in his text. However, it could be reasonably argued that her selection of the phrase ‘spiritual faith’ does not adequately appraise Lincoln’s text. Lincoln employed quotations from the Bible and then built aspects of his message upon them. It would be difficult to contest Goodwin’s point that Lincoln’s language belonged to a spiritual faith, but the language Lincoln chose was that of spirituality, which is discovered in and inspired by the Bible. Goodwin’s terminology could easily be applied to any speech with any inclusion of religious content, and is therefore rather nebulous. It could be suggested that this is an inadequate description of Lincoln’s presentation.

There are a number of works examining various aspects of Lincoln; the subjects themselves do not require a significant treatment of his use of the Bible. Almost all authors acknowledge that Lincoln used the Bible more than any other President, and most touch upon the presence of the Bible in Lincoln’s major speeches. The degree to which evaluation takes place varies considerably from book to book. Craig Symonds’ excellent examination of Lincoln’s role in the maritime aspect of the War contains an example of the treatment of the subject at hand. Symonds briefly

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>162</sup> Remsburg, *Was He a Christian?* 51.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 699.

touches upon the Second Inaugural Address and transcribes three extracts from the text, the third of which is an extended citation incorporating Lincoln's quotation of Psalm 19:9.<sup>165</sup> Lincoln's point is that he believed the War to be God's judgement for the sin of slavery, and the conflict would continue until said judgement was fulfilled. Symonds submits a rather different interpretation of Lincoln's remarks. He suggests that rather than presenting his considered view based on verse in the Bible, Lincoln instead "mused almost speculatively about the fates that had bought the nation to this moment."<sup>166</sup> He continues with the assertion that Lincoln 'mused' that the ultimate destiny of the War was "an unstoppable force of history."<sup>167</sup> Symonds has certainly expressed the mood of what Lincoln was saying, namely that the timing of the War's conclusion was not in the hands of human agencies. To say that Lincoln was expressing his thoughts as an unstoppable force of history is to overlook the implication of the quotation from the Address in which he stated his view "If God will that it continue ... 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"

In his treatment of the Address, Carwardine correctly describes it as "the most remarkable speech of his life."<sup>168</sup> He offers quotation of the last 75 words from the text, and presents the following excellent summary of Lincoln's intent and content,:

These scriptural cadences provided a fitting climax to a speech in which Lincoln sought to find political guidance through religious inquiry, by exploring the theological meaning of the events over which he had presided for four years.<sup>169</sup>

Carwardine's treatment of the Address does not seek to deeply engage with Lincoln's use of the Bible, but he emphatically acknowledges its importance and centrality in his text. In a book of 364 pages the word 'biblical' does not appear once, while the word 'Bible' appears 25 times, of which 18 refer to Lincoln; the vast majority are contained within quotations from Lincoln's own texts. Only on two of these occasions did Carwardine choose to connect Lincoln's compositions with the Bible; both occur in his assessment of slavery. In this discussion Carwardine stated "Lincoln's use of the Bible in the struggle over slavery was driven by conviction, not expediency."<sup>170</sup> Carwardine tends to use the term 'scripture' or 'scriptural' to refer to Lincoln's use of

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<sup>165</sup> Symonds, *Lincoln and His Admirals*, 359.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> Carwardine, *Purpose and Power*, Location 5018.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, Location 5035.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, Location 920.

the Bible, as he has done in consideration of this Address. He does not connect in any extensive way with the majority of this Address, his intention being to highlight one of his fundamental arguments surrounding Lincoln's faith. One of the outstanding achievements of Carwardine's book is his thoughtful and detailed presentation of the fact that Lincoln grew in his use of the Bible during his career.<sup>171</sup> He considers Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address to be the apex of Lincoln's gradual development in his public use of the Bible.

The gradual deepening and development of Lincoln's Christian faith is a theme other scholars have also considered. For example, Harris concluded that Lincoln's paragraph on the judgement of the Lord as the "culmination of Lincoln's spiritual awakening."<sup>172</sup> He considered that Lincoln's use of the Bible "so dominated the second inaugural speech that it assumed the character of a sermon."<sup>173</sup> In concluding his reflection upon Lincoln at the time of the Address, Carwardine considers that the experience of the Presidency in the context of the War had "wrought profound changes in Lincoln."<sup>174</sup> He suggests that Lincoln had moved closer to his Baptist roots,<sup>175</sup> which had inspired him to extraordinary engagement with the Bible, furnishing his audience with "a deep moral understanding of America's meaning."<sup>176</sup> Carwardine explains that Lincoln not only used the Bible in unprecedented quantity, but did so with evolving dexterity.<sup>177</sup> In his treatment of the Address, Gates also recognised what he considered to be Lincoln's spiritual heritage. He asserts that Lincoln:

blamed the South for destroying the Union and so many lives, but with Calvinistic resignation also explained that the whole nation should bear responsibility for the war's singular cause.<sup>178</sup>

Prindell identifies the influence of the Bible upon Lincoln's motivation. Citing the conciliatory tone of the Address, he states:

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<sup>171</sup> See Literature review Section 1.4 of this thesis.

<sup>172</sup> Harris, *Lincoln's Last Months*, 143.

<sup>173</sup> Carwardine, *Purpose and Power*, Location 5048.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 5061.

<sup>175</sup> "Religion had become more important to him. His God acquired a more Calvinistic, conventionally Protestant, appearance." *Ibid.*, 5074.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 5604.

<sup>177</sup> "The President's understanding of the almighty's role in Union affairs was far more subtle than that of many professional theologians. But it revealed a president capable of a meaningful engagement with the nation's Christian leaders." *Ibid.*, 5616.

<sup>178</sup> Gates, *Lincoln on Race*, 310.

Lincoln's lack of vindictiveness, his desire to heal the nations wounds without inflicting additional punishment for rebellion are most rationally explained by taking this grace as an outward sign of the spirit of Christ that possessed his heart.<sup>179</sup>

David Blight examined Lincoln's treatment of the purposes of God in the Address. He does not examine Lincoln's use of the Bible specifically, but recognises the influential nature of the discourse on the meaning of the conflict. He concludes, "The legacy of the Civil War, and Lincoln's place in it, are forever enmeshed in how we interpret this oratorical masterpiece."<sup>180</sup>

The majority of scholars seem to have discovered that it is almost impossible for any serious study, on any aspect of Lincoln's life, to be undertaken without some treatment of his Second Inaugural Address. The fact that almost all books on Lincoln refer in some measure to the Address makes the following question seem curious. James Tackach began his 2002 examination with this penetrating thought: "Why have Lincoln scholars devoted so little attention to Lincoln's most revealing speech?"<sup>181</sup> Although the Address is widely respected as one of the most important in American history, the actual treatment of the text is usual very scant, even when interesting conclusions are submitted. The examples that have already been presented in this subsection are of interest and add value to the field, but all offer very short coverage of just a page or two. Indeed, the majority of works choose not to engage in any depth with Lincoln's text. Tackach offers the following answer to his own inquiry: "Perhaps it is too overtly religious for a secular age, an age during which Americans prefer to see religious and political rhetoric living separate lives."<sup>182</sup> It is possible that this assertion is true of some scholars; it could also be suggested that the intentions of individual books do not require protracted investigation of Lincoln's use of the Bible. It is however the case that Lincoln relied heavily upon the text and message of the Bible in this composition, and a desire for a more complete understanding of Lincoln through his speeches has driven this thesis. A contention of this thesis is that in the majority of Lincoln's most celebrated Presidential speeches, his engagement with the

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<sup>179</sup> Watson F. Prindell, *Milestones to Immortality: The Pilgrimage of Abraham Lincoln* (Baltimore: Role Models Inc., 1988), 177.

<sup>180</sup> Norton et al., *A People and Nation*, Vol. 1. 423.

<sup>181</sup> Tackach, *Lincoln's Moral Vision*, xxvii.

<sup>182</sup> Tackach, *Lincoln's Moral Vision*, xxvii.

Bible was not simply a feature; it was an essential one without which the speech would have been dramatically different.

### **7.7. Conclusion to Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address**

The Address is unique in the history of the American Presidency. White's calculation of the amount of potentially biblical content within the Address is utterly unique when compared to other Presidential speeches. Lincoln chose the most important moment of his political career to engage in such prominent use of the bible to help articulate his message. Although there is no evidence that Lincoln possessed any knowledge of hermeneutics, it is interesting to note indications of a potential approach to interpreting the Bible. L. Gregory Jones presented a comparison of Augustine and Martin Luther King's hermeneutical engagement with their contemporary circumstances. His reflection is that although the situations into which they spoke were vastly different,

Common to such is the struggle to imagine the scriptures in the wake of particular experiences of joy and grief, triumph and suffering, blessing and oppression... but such struggle may also produce a deep engagement with the text and with the God who Christians believe is revealed through them.<sup>183</sup>

There is a sense that Lincoln was also engaged in this kind of interpretive struggle, that in the light of the War he sought to bring meaning through logic, the foundations of the American political traditions, and on occasions through his unprecedented use of the Bible. Talbert summarizes Gadamer by stating that the meaning of the text "must go beyond the author and take place in the course of history as readers continue to engage with the text."<sup>184</sup> Although it could be argued that Gadamer places too much responsibility upon the reader, the point is well made that the Bible can bring clarity to even political circumstances and military conflicts. It is suggested that this is in some measure true of Lincoln's use of the Bible in his political compositions.

The year 2011 marked the Quadricentennial of the King James Bible, and many events were held in the United Kingdom throughout the year.<sup>185</sup> Melvyn Bragg published his work in honour of this anniversary and he assesses Lincoln's Address, reflecting thus: "It was a magnificent achievement: it was world-changing. And the

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<sup>183</sup> L. Gregory Jones in Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays, eds. *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 152.

<sup>184</sup> Talbert, "The Reception History," 38.

<sup>185</sup> [www.kingjamesbibletrust.org](http://www.kingjamesbibletrust.org) "Events 2010-2011," accessed 11<sup>th</sup> December 2011.

King James Version had played the key role.”<sup>186</sup> Bragg noted that the influence of the Bible was not merely a matter of linguistic adornment, or an appeal to the perceived religious sensibilities of a section of the American Public; it had been effective tool, which Lincoln had used to significant effect in his Address.<sup>187</sup>

In most accomplished works on the sixteenth President, the comment is almost always made that Lincoln used the Bible more than any other President. The truth is that with the exception of a couple of brief quotations, employed by President John Quincy Adams, none of Lincoln’s predecessors used the Bible at all. Lincoln made eight major speeches as President between 1861 and 1865; of those four contain evidence of his use of the Bible. It has been demonstrated that the Address has come to occupy a uniquely important place in Lincoln’s legacy, but also in the wider canon of American history.

It was at the most crucial time in the nation’s history, in front of the largest audience ever to have heard a President speak, that Lincoln chose to construct his message with the assistance of Ronald White’s already stated list of biblical material.<sup>188</sup> Such was the impact of the Address, and in particular its biblical content, that it has been referred to as “America’s Sermon on the Mount.”<sup>189</sup> The Address was not simply a political performance, a crowd-pleasing exercise; it illuminated the issues that faced the nation, and was a glimpse into “the innermost thoughts and feelings of the Illinois lawyer who strove to understand and meet the demands of his great burden.”<sup>190</sup>

When Lincoln finished the delivery of the Address, Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase administered the oath of office; upon completion of the recitation, Lincoln kissed the Bible on which his hand rested.<sup>191</sup> The question can be raised as to whether the Address would be as profound and well remembered without Lincoln’s use of the Bible. This chapter has demonstrated not only Lincoln’s unprecedented engagement of the Bible in the Address, but has also made that point that without these ancient

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<sup>186</sup> Bragg, *Book of Books*, 387.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> White, *Lincoln*, Location 11558.

<sup>189</sup> Stout, *Upon the Altar*, 425; Braden, *Public Speaker*, 90.

<sup>190</sup> J.C. Randall, "Lincoln’s Great Declaration of Faith," *New York Times Magazine*, February 1949. 11.

<sup>191</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 2*. Location 43698; Harris, *Lincoln’s Last Months*, 144; It is interesting to note that Lincoln’s gesture was a repeat of that which he made, on the occasion of his First Inauguration, Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 2*. Location 23455.

words, this would not have been as celebrated in even modern history. It is interesting to note the opinion of the current incumbent. President Barack Obama reflected thus:

Imagine Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address without reference to ‘the judgements of the Lord’ ... his summoning of a higher truth helped inspire what seemed impossible, and move the nation to embrace a common destiny.<sup>192</sup>

### **7.8. Lincoln and popular expectation**

The weight of evidence presented in this thesis has sought to demonstrate that Lincoln believed in the power and authority of the Bible. The Bible influenced his thinking, and was used by him to reinforce what he believed to be the justice of his points. Some scholars have suggested that what Lincoln was actually engaged in was little more than an exercise in crowd pleasing.<sup>193</sup> This section will assess the argument that Lincoln used Christian scripture in placation of a Christian audience.

This theory was fathered by Herndon, who stated, “Mr Lincoln was the president of a Christian people, and he but used their ideas, language, speech and forms.”<sup>194</sup> Scholars have seized on the simplicity of Herndon’s argument that Lincoln’s use of the Bible was simply a matter of conformity. Jayne offers the following assessment.

It is well known that Abraham Lincoln had extensive knowledge of the Bible. He constantly quoted or alluded to it in his speeches. To the predominantly Christian-oriented common people of nineteenth-century America, this had great appeal. Lincoln was keenly aware of this and used it to his advantage in politics by publicly projecting the image of a mainstream Christian.<sup>195</sup>

Carwardine maintains that Lincoln’s use of the Bible was not a crowd-pleasing tactic; instead he insists that it was “driven by conviction, not expediency.”<sup>196</sup> Lincoln was certainly capable of shrewd political operation. The professional relationship between

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<sup>192</sup> This quotation is lifted from a speech give by Obama, before his Presidency: “Remarks by Senator Barack Obama: Call to Renewal Keynote Address,” in *Power in Words: The Stories Behind Barack Obama’s Speeches, from the State House to the White House*, Mary F. Berry and Josh Gottheimer (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008).

<sup>193</sup> Bray, *Reading With Lincoln*, 74.

<sup>194</sup> McMurtrie, *Lincoln’s Religion*, 17.

<sup>195</sup> Jayne, *American Manifesto*, 67.

<sup>196</sup> Carwardine, *Purpose and Power*, 42.

Lincoln and General McClellan was an example of Lincoln's willingness to work within the limitations of political pressures.<sup>197</sup> However, there were certain matters with which Lincoln proved to be uncompromising; these would contribute to his lack of personal popularity during the majority of his tenure.<sup>198</sup>

One question that requires attention relates to the contention from Herndon, and subsequent scholars, that it was expected that a 19th Century US President would make use of biblical language within his public address. The assumption of some scholars has already been sampled, namely that Lincoln used the Bible to gain favour with the populous. If this were the case then it would be reasonable to deduce that Lincoln's predecessors would have also been required to use the Bible in a significant public manner, thus creating a protocol that Lincoln would then be obliged to follow.

The confines of this thesis do not allow a comprehensive comparison between Lincoln and every statesman of his era. However, a brief but pertinent comparison will serve to illustrate the fact that if Lincoln was employing the Bible to appease his religious audience, he was neither following nor creating any convention therein. A focal point of any Presidential legacy is the Inauguration Address. Indeed, much of the debate surrounding Lincoln's engagement with the Bible is centred on his Second Inaugural Address. To furnish a reasonable comparison the two Inaugural Addresses which precede and follow Lincoln's will be examined.

### **7.8.1. Inaugural Addresses which preceded Lincoln**

Franklin Pierce delivered his only Inaugural Address on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1853.<sup>199</sup> He did not quote from the Bible. In a speech comprising 3,346 words,<sup>200</sup> he made four references to God and providence.<sup>201</sup> The tenor of Pierce's language is expressed in his concluding sentence: "I can express no better hope for my country than that the kind

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<sup>197</sup> General George McClellan was popular with powerful politicians whom Lincoln could ill afford to offend unnecessarily. He therefore accommodated the McClellan's military ineffectiveness, until the political circumstances altered. Gabor S. Boritt, ed. *Lincoln's Generals* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1995) Kindle edition, 2.

<sup>198</sup> Andrew Ferguson, Eileen Mackevich, and George Clack, eds. *Abraham Lincoln: Legacy of Freedom* (Published by the U.S. Department of State, 2010) Kindle edition, Location 579; Waugh, *Re-electing Lincoln*.

<sup>199</sup> McPherson, *To the Best of My Ability*, 357.

<sup>200</sup> Word count for President Pierce's Inaugural Address was calculated from the complete text recorded in, *Ibid.*, 357-359.

<sup>201</sup> "Under the guidance of a manifest and beneficial Providence;" "It is with me an earnest and vital belief that as the Union has been the source, under Providence, of our prosperity to this time;" "but in the nation's humble, acknowledged dependence upon God and His overruling Providence." *Ibid.*, 357; 359.



Providence which smiled upon our fathers, may enable their children to preserve the blessing they have inherited.”<sup>202</sup>

Lincoln’s immediate predecessor, James Buchanan, delivered his only Inaugural Address on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 1856.<sup>203</sup> In an address of 2,843 words,<sup>204</sup> he employed platitudes in a similar fashion to Pierce in three instances.<sup>205</sup> Again, his concluding words were the summation of his tone: “whilst humbly invoking the blessing of Divine Providence on this great people.”<sup>206</sup>

### **7.8.2. Inaugural Addresses which followed Lincoln**

When Lincoln was assassinated, Vice-President Johnson assumed the executive.<sup>207</sup> Johnson would only serve the remained of Lincoln’s second term of office, and as such never delivered an Inaugural Address. Johnson was succeeded by former Union General Grant, who delivered his first Inaugural Address on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1869.<sup>208</sup> In 1,141 words<sup>209</sup> Grant did not make any references to the Bible; he simply concluded, “and I ask the prayers of the nation to Almighty God in behalf of this consummation.”<sup>210</sup> He delivered his Second Inaugural Address on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1872<sup>211</sup>, a speech of 1354 words.<sup>212</sup> He commenced: “Under Providence I have been called a second time.”<sup>213</sup> and “Rather do I believe that our Great Maker is preparing the world, in His own good time.”<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 359.

<sup>203</sup> James Buchanan, *Mr. Buchanan’s Administration on the Eve of the Rebellion* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1866), 30.

<sup>204</sup> Word count for President Buchanan’s Inaugural Address was calculated from the complete text recorded in; McPherson, *To the Best of My Ability*, 360-362.

<sup>205</sup> “I must humbly invoke the God of our father for wisdom and firmness to execute its high and responsible duties;” “the richest political blessings which heaven ever bestowed upon any nation;” “because I feel an humble confidence that the kind Providence which inspired our fathers with wisdom.” Ibid., 360; 361; 362.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 362.

<sup>207</sup> Paul H. Bergeron, *Andrew Johnson’s Civil War and Reconstruction* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2011), 68.

<sup>208</sup> McFeeley, *Grant*, 286.

<sup>209</sup> Word count for President Grant’s First Inaugural Address was calculated from the complete text recorded in, McPherson, *To the Best of My Ability*, 368-369.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 369.

<sup>211</sup> McFeeley, *Grant*, 371.

<sup>212</sup> Word count for President Grant’s Second Inaugural Address was calculated from the complete text recorded in, McPherson, *To the Best of My Ability*, 370-371.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 370.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 371.

### 7.8.3. The Confederate Inaugural Address

The Civil War period offered a unique opportunity for executive comparison. From 1861 to 1865 there were two concurrent American Presidents in office. In 1861 both Lincoln and Confederate President Jefferson Davis commenced their tenures by delivering inaugural addresses.

Davis constructed his Inaugural Address in order to “explain rather than inspire.”<sup>215</sup> He delivered his address on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1861 at Montgomery, Alabama.<sup>216</sup> The speech extended for 1,877 words,<sup>217</sup> and contained four references to God.<sup>218</sup> Davis explained his expectation that “he who knew the hearts of men will judge the sincerity with which we have labored,”<sup>219</sup> whilst concluding with the following: “let me reverently invoke the God our fathers to guide and protect us in our efforts to perpetuate the principles which by His blessing they were able to vindicate ... with a continuance of His favour.”<sup>220</sup> If the American people demanded deep expressions of Christian devotion from their Presidents, then Davis was dangerously off-message, because “although he read the Bible... maintained a discreet distance from organized religion.”<sup>221</sup> The truth is that Davis’ speech was well received, and like the previous northern incumbents, he made virtually no reference to the Bible in his public address.

The fact is that if Lincoln were to follow the example of these leaders of the American political establishment, all that would be required of him was that he should offer a couple of allusions to God’s general blessing. However, this thesis has demonstrated that Lincoln used key moments to make sophisticated and expansive citation of the Bible’s text and message. It is not unreasonable to suggest that if Lincoln was simply indulging popular religious sensibilities, then based on the practice of other Presidents, the vast majority of his engagement with the Bible was unnecessary.

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<sup>215</sup> Chadwick, *Two American Presidents*, 124.

<sup>216</sup> F.H. Alfriend, *The Life of Jefferson Davis* (Bedford: Applewood Books, 1868), 239.

<sup>217</sup> Word count for Confederate President Davis’ First Inaugural Address was calculated from the complete text recorded in, Cooper, *Jefferson Davis*, 198-203.

<sup>218</sup> Davis’ two unquoted allusions to God are, “enjoyment of that spate and independent existence which we have asserted, and which, with the blessing of Providence, we intend to maintain.” “It will but remain for us with a firm resolve to appeal to arms and invoke the blessing of Providence upon a just cause.” *Ibid.*, 198 and 200.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 202-203.

<sup>221</sup> Davis, *Jefferson Davis*, 82. Allen also comments that on, “orthodox and conservative views of the Bible and religion that Davis held for the rest of his life.” Felicity Allen, *Jefferson Davis: Unconquerable Heart* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 52.

#### 7.8.4. Everett's Gettysburg address

The Gettysburg Address is one of the most celebrated episodes of Lincoln's legacy.<sup>222</sup> The main speaker at the dedication of the Gettysburg Cemetery was Edward Everett.<sup>223</sup> The fact that both Lincoln and Everett spoke on the same occasion furnishes an interesting opportunity to compare Lincoln's address with the efforts of one of the most celebrated orators<sup>224</sup> of the Antebellum. If protocol demanded American statesmen use the Bible to gain favour with the religious populace, then surely a master craftsman like Everett would have lead the way.

In a speech of 13,544 words<sup>225</sup> to a predominantly Christian audience, Everett chose ancient Greece and not the Bible as his inspiration. He offered quotation from Pericles.

The whole earth' said Pericles, as he stood over the remains of his fellow citizens, who had fallen in the first year of the Peloponnesian War, 'the whole earth is the sepulchre of illustrious men.'<sup>226</sup>

The fact is that Everett captivated the Gettysburg audience for over two hours, without a single biblical quotation or reference.<sup>227</sup> Indeed, if the logic of stated commentators is accepted, then Everett would have been lambasted for introducing the pagan history of ancient Greece into such a solemn occasion in Christian America. The opposite was in fact the case; he held "the undivided and at times almost breathless attention of his audience."<sup>228</sup> Everett was known for this style of content<sup>229</sup>, and far from being shunned by the populace, Hay and Nicolay assessed the decision to invite him to present an address of such national importance: "If there was an American who was qualified by moral training, by literary culture, by political study

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<sup>222</sup> The Gettysburg Address has been examined in Section 6.2 of this thesis.

<sup>223</sup> Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 24.

<sup>224</sup> Richard A. Katula, *The Eloquence of Edward Everett: America's Greatest Orator* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010), 2.

<sup>225</sup> Word count for Everett's Gettysburg address was calculated from the complete text recorded in, *Ibid.*, 213-247.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>227</sup> The success of Everett's address is commented upon by Nicolay and Hay; Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 8*. 199.

<sup>228</sup> Clark E. Carr, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: An Address*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Co., 1909), 55-56.

<sup>229</sup> Everett developed a love of the study and literature of Ancient Greece as early as 1812. He served as Professor of Greek Literature at Harvard from 1819-1825. Paul A. Varg, *Edward Everett: The Intellectual in the Turmoil of Politics* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses Inc., 1992).

... that man was Edward Everett.”<sup>230</sup> They further reported that the conclusion of the speech, which featured quotation from Pericles, was a “brilliant peroration, the echoes of which were lost in the long and hearty plaudits of the great multitude.”<sup>231</sup>

The expectation of the American public for their public figures is reflected in Taylor’s biography of Lincoln’s contemporary, Senator Charles Sumner. His parents were said to have given him the best start in life “to be accepted as a gentleman required a classical education.”<sup>232</sup> The narrative of Sumner’s formation continued with an account of the young man’s preparation for his future: “He continued the traditional stress on memorization and recitation as a foundation of public speaking.”<sup>233</sup> The list of that which Sumner was encouraged to use as preparation for public oratory was, “Caesar, Sallust, Cicero, Ovid, Virgil, and others, as well as a good introduction to Greek.”<sup>234</sup> This was not just American practice; elegant English society required a gentleman to be acquainted with the classics. British Prime Minister William E. Gladstone was a religious man from the Anglican tradition.<sup>235</sup> In 1855 he recorded this entry in his diary: “Began the Iliad: with serious intentions on working something out on old Homer if I can.”<sup>236</sup> Indeed, he came to rely on Homer for some of his political insight.<sup>237</sup> Gladstone was considered “a churchman in the service of the state”<sup>238</sup>, while absorbing inspiration from the classics. It would appear that Lincoln would have been quite at liberty to construct his political speeches from the classics, rather than the Bible. The fact is that Lincoln “would make more references to the Bible than any other American President.”<sup>239</sup> Indeed Smith asserts, “Lincoln cited the scriptures and discussed theologically significant questions in his addresses more than the avowedly Christian statesmen of the late nineteenth Century.”<sup>240</sup> Wolf observed, “No President has ever had the detailed knowledge of the

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<sup>230</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 8. 192.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>232</sup> Anne-Marie Taylor, *Charles Sumner and the Legacy of the American Enlightenment, 1811-1851* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 26.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>235</sup> Gladstone eventually developed a theological position that was most comfortable in the High Anglican tradition. Richard Shannon, *Gladstone: God And Politics* (London: Continuum U.K., 2007. Reprint, 2008), 22.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 316.

<sup>237</sup> “Dissatisfied with the Hebrew scriptures as a statesman’s manual; at the same time he came to see Homer as the provider of the kind of hints, illuminations, and insights about man, society and politics he was looking for.” *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 306.

<sup>239</sup> Donald, *Lincoln Rediscovered*, 67.

<sup>240</sup> Smith, *Faith and the Presidency*, 92.

Bible that Lincoln had. No President has ever woven its thought and its rhythms into the warp and woof of his state papers as he did.”<sup>241</sup> He not only cited American contemporaries, but also Gladstone and Dutch Prime Minister Abraham Kuyper.<sup>242</sup>

The suggestion that Lincoln made such prominent use of the Bible purely to please the public is to ignore Lincoln’s personal integrity in handling Scripture. Schurz<sup>243</sup> is reported as considering Lincoln “a man of profound feeling, correct and firm principles, and incorruptible honesty, possessing common sense to a remarkable degree and a strength born of conviction. His failings... are those of a good man.”<sup>244</sup> Charnwood’s assessment was that Lincoln “loved the Bible and knew it intimately;”<sup>245</sup> he considered that Lincoln’s treatment of the Bible, especially regarding the Divine will, could simply be taken at face value.<sup>246</sup> Rable’s conclusion is that, despite the ambiguity of Lincoln’s personal faith, he was sincere in his public use of the Bible.<sup>247</sup>

#### **7.8.5. The assessment of Lincoln’s contemporaries**

One of the best-known testimonials of Lincoln’s thoughts on the Bible is a reference from his close friend Joshua Speed. In the summer of 1864 Speed found Lincoln relaxing with the Bible. Lincoln told him to “take this book upon reason that you can, and the balance on faith, and you will live and die a happier better man.”<sup>248</sup> Speed was not writing with an agenda to present Lincoln in a religious light; indeed, the context of the conversation was a mild disagreement in which Speed expressed his scepticism.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Wolf, *Almost Chosen People*, 131.

<sup>242</sup> Smith, *Faith and the Presidency*, 92.

<sup>243</sup> Carl Schurz (1829-1906) was a Republican and heavily involved in the anti-slavery movement. President Lincoln appointed him Minister to Spain, in 1861. He then served as a General in the Union Army. Hans L. Trefousse, *Carl Schurz: A Biography* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982. Reprint, New York: Fordham University Press, 1988).

<sup>244</sup> Waugh, *Re-electing Lincoln*, 80. It is important to note that Waugh also furnishes citations from Herndon, Frederick Douglass, Henry Ward Beecher, and Joseph Holt, all on pages 79 and 80.

<sup>245</sup> Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, 340.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Rable, *Almost Chosen People*, 381-384.

<sup>248</sup> David H. Donald, *We are Lincoln Men* (New York: Simon and Schuster paperbacks, 2003), 63.

<sup>249</sup> When Speed discovered Lincoln reading the Bible he told his friend “If you have recovered from your skepticism, I am sorry to say that I have not.” The quotation that has been offered in the main body of this paragraph (of this thesis) actually began with Lincoln saying, “You are wrong Speed.” Speed was not seeking to present Lincoln as a Christian, when he himself was still a skeptic. Donald, *Lincoln Men*, 63.

Wolf sets out the ways in which Lincoln used the Bible in his public address, and concluded on every occasion that it was a genuine reflection of his personal view of the value of the Bible's message.<sup>250</sup> Trueblood is an example of a number of scholars who offer the observation that the Bible influenced the cadence of Lincoln's language, even when he was not offering a directly quotation or allusion.<sup>251</sup> The fact is that if Lincoln was not simply manipulating the text of the Bible to please the public. The more plausible explanation is that Lincoln's words were a substantial indication of the influence of the Bible upon his thinking.

Nicolay recorded his interview with Browning, who could not recall a conversation about religion with Lincoln,<sup>252</sup> but did remember Lincoln's reading of the Bible. Browning declared that Lincoln was very private about any religious devotions he may have practiced, but was very relaxed about his reading of the Bible.<sup>253</sup> In 1860 Rev. Hale<sup>254</sup> wrote to Reverend Baldwin of New Jersey regarding Lincoln. Hale was unable to confirm that Lincoln was a classical evangelical Christian<sup>255</sup>, but he was more convinced about the genuine nature of his use of the Bible: "From the frequency and readiness with which he is accustomed to quote from the Bible and the use he makes of such quotations it is clear that he has read and pondered its contents."<sup>256</sup>

Elisabeth Keckley<sup>257</sup> recalled an incident in 1863, in which Lincoln had received discouraging news from The War Department. She remembered Lincoln reaching for the Bible and after fifteen minutes reading he "was lighted up with new resolution and hope. The change was marked I could but wonder at it..."<sup>258</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe considered Lincoln's words to be a genuine reflection of his thoughts. She made the following observation about the effect of the War upon the President:

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<sup>250</sup> Wolf, *Almost Chosen People*, 131-142.

<sup>251</sup> Trueblood, *A Spiritual Biography*, 76.

<sup>252</sup> Burlingame, *An Oral History*, 5.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>254</sup> Reverend Albert Hale was the Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Springfield, Illinois. *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>255</sup> Hale wrote, "I always presume he is a believer in the divine origin of the Christian religion and not a skeptic." Hale was not able to declare that Lincoln was born again, "I wish I could say he that he is born of God." *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> Elisabeth Hobbs Keckley (1820-1907) purchased her own freedom from slavery. During the Presidential years she was dressmaker to Mary Lincoln and soon became a friend and confidant of the Lincoln family. In 1868 she published her autobiography. Joseph M. Flora, Amber Vogel, and Bryan A. Gienza, eds. *Southern Writers: A New Biographical Dictionary* (Baton Rouge: University of Louisiana Press, 2006), 229; Elisabeth H. Keckley, *Behind the Scenes, or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House* (New York: G.W. Carleton and Co., 1868. Reprint, New York: Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 2005).

<sup>258</sup> Keckley, *Behind the Scenes*, 53.

“through this dreadful national crisis, he has been forced by the very anguish of the struggle to look upward.”<sup>259</sup>

Sandburg recorded Brooks’ recollection of Lincoln deriving comfort from the Old Testament, by the memorizing of the Psalms.<sup>260</sup> Bush records that “Brooks stated that Lincoln could correct a misquotation of scripture and furnish the biblical reference, such was his knowledge of the Bible.”<sup>261</sup>

Lincoln did not simply have a reasonable knowledge of the Bible; an account of an incident in 1864 reveals his rather extraordinary knowledge of the Bible. It came to Lincoln’s attention that some unsettled members of the Republican had decided to nominate John C. Fremont, as a potential Presidential opponent to himself. Nicolay recalled Lincoln receiving the news that this *nomination* was actually the work of a conference in Cleveland, Ohio, which numbered only 400 men. He picked up the Bible from his desk and quickly found and read the following text:

And every one that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented,  
gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them, and  
there were with him about four hundred men.<sup>262</sup>

On hearing the news about that group of disaffected men, Lincoln thought of the gathering of David’s dubious characters during the Jewish civil war with Saul. Lincoln’s quotation comprises the majority of 1 Samuel 22:2.<sup>263</sup> It is possible that a Bible-reading President guiding a nation through a civil war might well read of the progress of a civil war in the Old Testament. However, for Lincoln to have remembered the verse, and that it contained the same number of delegates as the Cleveland Republican gathering, and then to be able to locate it quickly, is surely an impressive feat, and more importantly a demonstration of Lincoln’s mastery of the Bible.

The point is not to deny the very real influence of Protestant Christianity in American society, but to acknowledge that the scope of the American experience was able to accommodate, and admire classical scholarship. The American statesman was

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<sup>259</sup> Charles B. Strozier, *Lincoln’s Quest for Union: Public and Private Meanings* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982. Reprint, 1987), 63.

<sup>260</sup> Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 4*. 114.

<sup>261</sup> Harold K. Bush, ed. *Lincoln in His Own Time* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2011), 208.

<sup>262</sup> Helen Nicolay, *Personal Traits of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: The Century Company, 1912. Reprint, Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2006), 296.

<sup>263</sup> Lincoln omitted to read the first seven words of the verse, “*And everyone that was in distress...*” He proceeded with a complete reading of 1 Samuel 22:2. Nicolay, *Personal Traits*, 296.

not expected to offer frequent reference to the Bible; neither therefore was Lincoln. Lincoln used the Bible because he was able to do so, with impressive dexterity, in order to reinforce his political message.

### **7.9. Conclusion to Chapter Seven**

The assessment of what White considers *Lincoln's Greatest Speech* is important in understanding Lincoln, the War and the direction of the Republic. The evidence has been considered that Lincoln appeared to use the Bible to deliver aspects of his message during his Second Inaugural Address. Indeed it is reasonable to submit that some of Lincoln's thinking on the meaning and conclusion of the War were in part constructed around and inspired by his understanding of the Bible. If Lincoln had not used the Bible in his composition of this Address, his thoughts on the War, the sin of American slavery, and the context for Reconstruction would have required an entirely different presentation. The contention that a Christian electorate demanded obvious use of the Bible is not borne out in the Inaugural Addresses of other 19<sup>th</sup> Century Presidents, or even other major examples with which Lincoln is instantly comparable. In the light of this, it is possible to suggest that Lincoln's illustrious legacy would have been reduced if he had not engaged with the Bible in selected political speeches and writings.



# CHAPTER EIGHT

## CONCLUSION

### 8.1. Introduction

Arnold commented on Lincoln's knowledge of the Bible, "it was truly said of Lincoln that no man, clergyman or otherwise, could be found so familiar with this book as he,"<sup>1</sup> and Trueblood asserted that: "There is no possibility of understanding Abraham Lincoln if we do not understand how deeply the fundamental teachings of the Bible had entered into his mature mentality."<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the place of the Bible in the political speeches and writings of Abraham Lincoln. There has been a great deal of previous scholarly examination of Lincoln's personal faith, which has primarily sought to establish whether or not he was a Christian. The issues of what he believed have tantalised historians from the time of Lincoln's assassination up until most recent scholarship. This has not been the focus of this thesis. The examination of Lincoln's use of the Bible is not mutually exclusive from an investigation of his faith. There would be inevitable overlap between these issues. The quest to discover the place of the Bible in Lincoln's compositions is a different proposition, because it is based primarily upon what Lincoln said and wrote. The evaluation of Lincoln's engagement with the Bible is speculative in the sense that his ultimate motivations for selecting a given text can only be surmised based on the facts of each individual case. However the fact that the primary activity of this research is concentrated on what Lincoln actually wrote and said, inevitably means that the exercise is slightly less speculative than the task of establishing Lincoln's largely undeclared personal beliefs.

The CW allowed scholars access to all known Lincoln compositions. That Lincoln used the Bible is a matter of record. The overwhelming majority of scholars accept the fact that Lincoln used the Bible more any other US President.<sup>3</sup> In order to grasp the place of the Bible in Lincoln's compositions, the entire body of the CW was thoroughly examined. A striking feature is the dexterity with which Lincoln engaged with the scriptures. He was able to deliver important political points by employing the Bible in a non-religious manner. For Lincoln, the wisdom and authority of the Bible

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac N. Arnold, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg and Co., 1885), 21.

<sup>2</sup> Trueblood, *A Spiritual Biography*, 112.

<sup>3</sup> Section 1.1 of this thesis.

was applicable to the most practical aspects of national life, and when he considered the occasion demanded he was able to use the Bible to reinforce his political convictions. It is impossible to know with absolute certainty what was in Lincoln's mind, but the weight of testimony from the CW provides significant evidence to construct a case that the place of the Bible developed into an essential aspect of Lincoln's political career.

## **8.2. The progress of this research**

The introductory first chapter prepared the ground for a largely narrative examination of Lincoln's use of the Bible. It was important to make a careful examination of each occasion when Lincoln used the Bible, in its historical context. The evaluation would assess the importance of the Bible in Lincoln's texts, as well as seeking comprehension of its place in the wider understanding of Lincoln and his political career. A literature review of major contributions to this field was offered, as well as an attempt to establish a criteria for understanding the different types of biblical reception that were at play in Lincoln's compositions.

### **8.2.1. The formative years**

This chapter examined the ways in which Lincoln experienced the Bible during his youth. Lincoln had an inquiring mind and possessed a love of books.<sup>4</sup> The King James Bible was one of the only books available, and so Lincoln absorbed himself in its pages, and developed an extraordinary knowledge of the text. His Bible reading was in the context of the rather narrow experience of a tiny 'Hard Shell' Baptist congregation.<sup>5</sup>

When Lincoln began his career in New Salem he was exposed to the healthy atmosphere of debate, and experienced challenging thinking contrary his childhood home. When he qualified as a lawyer the new Illinois State Capital, Springfield, would provide the context for the remainder of his pre-Presidential life.

Lincoln's political involvement yielded two major speeches, the Lyceum<sup>6</sup> and Peoria<sup>7</sup> Addresses. Without the information gained from examination of these early years, it would not be possible to understand the Bible in the hands of the President.

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<sup>4</sup> Section 2.3.1 of this thesis.

<sup>5</sup> Warren, *Lincoln's Youth*, 114.

<sup>6</sup> Basler, *Collected Works, Vol. 1*. 108.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, *Vol. 2*. 240.

This chapter serves to demonstrate that Lincoln's use of the Bible was a gradual process, which gained momentum as his political career progressed.

### **8.2.2. The dividing house**

This chapter sought to understand Lincoln's use of the Bible during his final years as a lawyer and politician in Springfield. In 1858 and 1859 Lincoln delivered his First<sup>8</sup> and Second<sup>9</sup> Lectures on Discoveries and Inventions. These reveal that Lincoln considered the Bible to be an authentic source of information, which could be employed to illuminate the most modern of subjects.<sup>10</sup> Lincoln's crowning achievement of the 1850's came in the form of his 1858 House Divided Speech.<sup>11</sup> The intensely practical points raised in this Speech were punctuated by Lincoln's use and application of a biblical paraphrase, which was to have an immediate and lasting impact. The suggestion is made that place of the Bible in this composition was somewhat essential and set the tone for the political philosophy that would motivate Lincoln throughout the presidential years.

### **8.2.3. Springfield lawyer to President-elect**

This chapter continues to examine Lincoln's use of the Bible in the aftermath of the House Divided Speech. Lincoln engaged Senator Douglas in a now famous series of Debates,<sup>12</sup> which gave voice to issues of national concern. The impact of Lincoln's use of the Bible is seen in Douglas' specific and sustained attacks on Lincoln for using the 'house divided' phrase.<sup>13</sup> Lincoln's other major speech of this period was his Address at Cooper Union, which contained no significant evidence of Lincoln's engagement with the Bible.<sup>14</sup> This is an important aspect of understanding the place of the Bible in Lincoln's political career. Lincoln was complex and could be unpredictable and even unconventional. Having made this point, a pattern does emerge that when he had an important message to communicate he used the Bible to deliver the key thought, as in the House Divided Speech. One of the most searching

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 437-442.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., Vol.3. 357.

<sup>10</sup> Section 3.3.3 of this thesis.

<sup>11</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. 452.

<sup>12</sup> The seven debates between Abraham Lincoln and Senator Stephen A. Douglas are contained in. Ibid., Vol. 3. 1-325.

<sup>13</sup> Section 4.2.2.2 of this thesis.

<sup>14</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3. 522

questions regarding Lincoln's use of the Bible relates to whether he was sincere, or simply a tactician. His Farewell Address at Springfield<sup>15</sup> is significant in seeking to answer this. Lincoln's unplanned impromptu speech to people who knew him well contains evidence of his engagement with the Bible.

#### **8.2.4. The commencement of Lincoln's tenure**

This chapter dealt with a misunderstanding of Lincoln's use of the Bible. Aspects Lincoln's terminology has been cited as evidence of deistic beliefs. What are considered vague terms for God,<sup>16</sup> are coupled with Herndon's contention that Lincoln's engagement with the Bible was not born out of sincere personal beliefs. It was demonstrated that the suggestion of deism is inconsistent with Lincoln's use of the Bible. His First Inaugural Address contains some interesting indications of Lincoln's use of the Bible, as did his Annual Address to Congress 1862.<sup>17</sup>

#### **8.2.5 The march to Union victory and a second term**

The final turbulent years of Lincoln's life afforded him the opportunity to make an indelible impression on history. In the Gettysburg Address Lincoln delivered words containing a political philosophy that would impact on the identities of generations of Americans. Wills entitles it, *The Words That Remade America*.<sup>18</sup> There is a case for suggesting that Lincoln's use of the Bible was not simply to adorn his speeches with convenient and recognizable phrases, as here it shaped policy.

A section of this chapter is devoted to the examination of Lincoln's treatment of the will of God. There is again evidence to suggest his views were informed in considerable part by his expansive knowledge of the Bible. Lincoln was not engaging in a purely philosophical exercise; his view of the will of God explores the divine purpose for the nation in relation to the nature and duration of the War.

Of particular interest to this research was the discovery of new material, which somewhat helps to understand Herndon's reliability as a commentator on Lincoln's use of the Bible.<sup>19</sup> Herndon clearly had such strong feelings against the validity and accuracy of the Bible, that he projected his opinions onto Lincoln.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., Vol. 4. 190.

<sup>16</sup> Section 5.2.1 of this thesis.

<sup>17</sup> Basler, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5. 518.

<sup>18</sup> Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*.

<sup>19</sup> Section 6.6.2 of this thesis.

### 8.2.6. Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address

The importance of Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address is such that it required separate consideration. The case was made for the importance of this piece in historical memory.<sup>20</sup> The place of the Bible in this address is of considerable importance to its composition and message. Frederick Douglass reflected the extent to which the Bible featured in Lincoln's delivery.<sup>21</sup> One of the most important contributions was that through Lincoln's treatment of the will of God he was able to ascribe meaning to the War.<sup>22</sup> This Address reiterates the conclusions previously stated; Lincoln's use of the Bible helped clarify his thinking towards his leadership during the War.

The Bible also furnished Lincoln with an authoritative motive to guide the daunting prospect of reconstruction. There was an understandable desire to make the South pay for tearing the nation apart in civil war, but Lincoln appealed to the Bible in a call for mercy to be shown to the Confederacy.<sup>23</sup>

One aspect of Lincoln's use of the Bible that is rarely spoken of is courage. In fact, a considerable portion of scholarship sets a somewhat opposite tone by suggesting that Lincoln used the Bible to gain favour with the Christian populace.<sup>24</sup> The possibility of this being the case is examined.<sup>25</sup> The fact is that in using the Bible Lincoln was not following any precedent set forth by any other Presidential Inaugural Addresses. It is also a matter of common sense that if Lincoln were using the Bible to endear himself, surely he would have used it to say something pleasant or affirming. Lincoln used his Second Inaugural Address to become the first President to declare to the American public that the nation was, in fact, under judgment.<sup>26</sup> Far from using the Bible to gain favour, Lincoln was courageous in his use of the Bible.

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<sup>20</sup> Section 7.3 of this thesis.

<sup>21</sup> White, *Lincoln's Greatest Speech*, 184.

<sup>22</sup> Section 7.4.2.2. of this thesis.

<sup>23</sup> Section 7.4.2.2 of this thesis.

<sup>24</sup> Jayne wrote thus of Lincoln's knowledge of the Bible. "To the predominantly Christian-oriented common people of nineteenth-century America, this had great appeal. Lincoln was keenly aware of this and used it to his advantage in politics by publicly projecting the image of a mainstream Christian." Jayne, *American Manifesto*, 67.

<sup>25</sup> Section 7.8 of this thesis.

<sup>26</sup> Section 7.4.2.2 of this thesis.

### **8.3. Summary of Lincoln's use of the Bible**

The completion of this exhaustive examination of Lincoln's use of the Bible, furnished a number of conclusions on the way in which Lincoln used the Bible.

#### **8.3.1. Extensive**

Lincoln's use of the Bible was extensive. He used both Old and New Testaments texts and themes. His knowledge of the Bible was considerable and he was not, therefore, limited to well known passages.

#### **8.3.2. Imaginative**

Lincoln's use of the Bible was rather imaginative; he was never flippant with it, but he did not use it in an exclusively religious way. He used it as a practical tool to help accomplish his leadership goals. He used it as a rebuke, and was able to use it with a note of humour, and in ways that fitted the situation he was addressing. His use of the Bible had a certain originality, which it is suggested could have derived from an exhaustive working knowledge that was gained since the time of his earliest reading experiences.

#### **8.3.3. Unpredictable**

Lincoln could be unpredictable in his use of the Bible. This thesis cites occasions when a biblical reference would have been appropriate, if not expected.<sup>27</sup> Lincoln did not always engage with the Bible on occasions when it would have appeared apposite.

#### **8.3.4. Unprecedented**

Lincoln's use of the Bible was unprecedented, in the history of the American Presidency.<sup>28</sup> It is an oft-quoted fact that Lincoln used the Bible more than any president before or since. However the statement is almost disingenuous, as it assumes that other presidents used the Bible, but Lincoln did so more often. This is not an accurate assessment of the situation. Examination was made of the place of the Bible in the Inaugural Addresses, which surrounded Lincoln, as well as some specific comparisons with Confederate President Davis. The fact is that in these most

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<sup>27</sup> Section 8.2.3 made reference to this issue.

<sup>28</sup> This matter is addressed in Section 7.8.1 and 7.8.2 of this thesis.

important of speeches there was virtually no reference to the Bible by the other executives. Lincoln was not following or setting a precedent for such Bible use.

### **8.3.5. Courageous**

Lincoln was pragmatic and prepared to tolerate considerable personal inconvenience to accomplish his political objectives. However Lincoln was determined, audacious, and certainly capable of decisive and unpopular action if he believed that the occasion demanded. He was courageous in his use of the Bible. In this final chapter Lincoln's use of the Bible in the Second Inaugural Address has been referred to as rather brave. The case was made in chapter three of this thesis that Lincoln's plans to employ the "House Divided" phrase was vehemently opposed by his closest advisors.<sup>29</sup>

## **8.4. Contribution to scholarship**

This exhaustive examination of Lincoln's use of the Bible is different from much of the existing investigations, because of its primary focus on the Bible. Most works that consider Lincoln and the Bible do so only in as much as it assists the evaluation of Lincoln's personal beliefs.

Having examined all possible known examples of Lincoln's engagement with the Bible, there were a number of instances in which the biblical context to the chosen phrases was inspected. This research sits in a gap in current scholarship by providing complete coverage of the instances when it can be argued that Lincoln used the Bible. The fact that Lincoln used the Bible as he did is in itself a significant fact, but of even more importance is the way in which he did so. Lincoln did not simply employ the Bible as a source book for convenient quotations. He displayed evidence that the Bible influenced his thinking in some of the most practical and crucial aspects of his Presidency.

A legitimate consideration arises from the assertion that the Bible influenced Lincoln in the thinking that guided the Union through the War. It could be argued that the Bible did not influence Lincoln, but that he developed his own philosophy and then used the authority of the Bible to punctuate his message. This is possible, however, the difficulty with this is the consideration that the Bible was not a late addition to Lincoln's thought processes. If he had not read the Bible until his later

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<sup>29</sup> Section 3.4.4.1.3 of this thesis.

adult years then there would have been ample time to develop his views, and then use the Bible to reinforce them. One of the purposes of the thorough examination of Lincoln's childhood and youth was to demonstrate that from his earliest experiences he was exposed to the Bible, and so it became part of his cognitive development. It is impossible to say what was in Lincoln's mind, but the fact that he read the Bible from his young days suggests that its influence on his thinking can be taken to be genuine inspiration.

The question of development is also a feature of Lincoln's use of the Bible. Lincoln grew as a person and, therefore, so did the sophistication of his use of the Bible. Lincoln did develop and even change, especially during the War. Again, Lincoln's childhood exposure to the Bible suggests that his remarkable knowledge was already in place by the time he left his father's home. It is possible that Lincoln grew in his use of the Bible, but it is also likely that as the occasions and opportunities for serious comment presented themselves, so Lincoln used the Bible at times of national crisis.

Part of this research recognises that Lincoln's use of the Bible is particularly visible in his thinking during the War. This fact stands on its own importance. This thesis submits that Lincoln believed that the Bible was the final source of authority available to mankind and he treated engaged with it in this vein.

This research has sought to make a case for the fact that Lincoln used the Bible to notable effect. The case was also made that Lincoln's political career would not have been ultimately as illustrious, both in his lifetime and in historical memory, had he not used the Bible. In asserting the importance of the Bible as a source for Lincoln, the question arises as to whether Lincoln could have used other sources to equal effect. Other significant sources that influenced Lincoln were the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the law itself. Lincoln did admire the Constitution and had it at his disposal, and he was influenced by these factors. However, at key moments Lincoln chose the Bible to solidify and punctuate his political message. The same could be said of the classics; Lincoln was not a Greek scholar as Everett was, but he was a devotee of Shakespeare and was well able to have embroidered his speeches and writings with quotations. The fact is that Lincoln had many sources of inspiration at his disposal, but at salient moments he used the Bible to make points of enormous importance. A contribution of this research to the wider study of Lincoln is



that it makes a case for the fact that Lincoln's impact and legacy would have been weakened had he not used the Bible in his speeches and writings.

Another contribution to the field is the discovery of new material in Herndon's notes. These serve to compound the emerging awareness of some scholars that in the matter of Lincoln and the Bible, Herndon is not a reliable commentator.

### **8.5. In conclusion to Chapter Eight**

The exhaustive examination of the CW has revealed something of the place of the Bible in Lincoln's political compositions. He was skilful, imaginative, sometimes unpredictable, and certainly unprecedented.

It is always difficult to be dogmatic when a historical consideration carries the possibility of the 'what if.' However, close examination of Lincoln's work, particularly his most important Presidential speeches and writings, reveals that the Bible became so important to Lincoln's political message that it can be in itself, considered essential.

This final chapter sought to express some of the conclusions of this research. However, it would be wrong to ignore the fact that the research has opened up genuine and important possibilities for further investigation. The place of the Bible in some of Lincoln's major speeches would benefit from deeper consideration. The place of the Bible in the Second Inaugural Address could in itself be the subject of a doctoral thesis. The greater implications of Lincoln's treatment of the will of God could be equally scrutinized. Also, the newly discovered material means that there is scope for some serious inquiry into Herndon's agenda on faith and Lincoln.

Lincoln used the Bible more than any other President. If he had not done so his political speeches and writings would probably not have been so influential in his lifetime or as part of his legacy. Warren's assessment is that, "No book could be more appropriately associated with Abraham Lincoln than the Bible."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Warren, "Historic Lincoln Bibles."

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