



Lincoln and Religion (Concise Lincoln Library)

Ferenc Morton Szasz, Margaret Connell Szasz

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Abraham Lincoln's faith has commanded more broad-based attention than that of any other American president. Although he never joined a denomination, Baptists, Presbyterians, Quakers, Episcopalians, Disciples of Christ, Spiritualists, Jews, and even atheists claim the sixteenth president as one of their own. In this concise volume, Ferenc Morton Szasz and Margaret Connell Szasz offer both an accessible survey of the development of Lincoln's religious views and an informative launch pad for further academic inquiry. A singular key to Lincoln's personality, especially during the presidential years, rests with his evolving faith perspective.

After surveying Lincoln's early childhood as a Hard-Shell Baptist in Kentucky and Indiana, the authors chronicle his move from skepticism to participation in Episcopal circles during his years in Springfield, and, finally, after the death of son Eddie, to Presbyterianism. They explore Lincoln's relationship with the nation's faiths as president, the impact of his son Willie's death, his adaptation of Puritan covenant theory to a nation at war, the role of prayer during his presidency, and changes in his faith as reflected in the Emancipation Proclamation and his state papers and addresses. Finally, they evaluate Lincoln's legacy as the central figure of America's civil religion, an image sharpened by his prominent position in American currency.

A closing essay by Richard W. Etulain traces the historiographical currents in the literature on Lincoln and religion, and the volume concludes with a compilation of Lincoln's own words about religion.

In assessing the enigma of Lincoln's Christianity, the authors argue that despite his lack of church membership, Lincoln lived his life through a Christian ethical framework. His years as president, dominated by the Civil War and personal loss, led Lincoln to move into a world beholden to Providence.

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