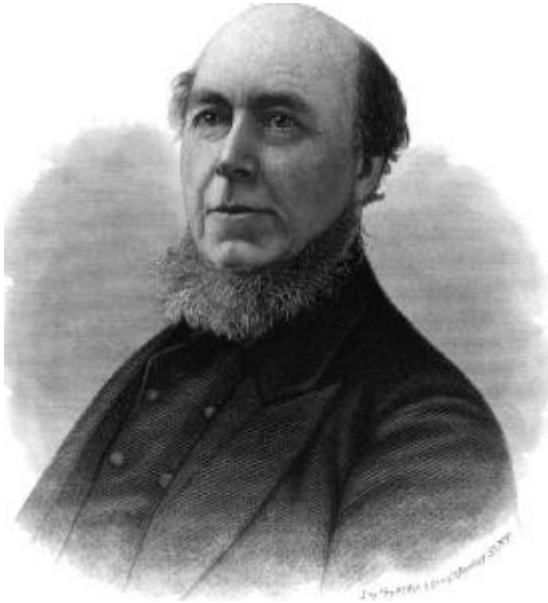


Young Lawyer Abraham Lincoln Refuses Payment for his Services from Charles Chiniquy



Charles Chiniquy

The excerpts below are from chapter 58 of Charles Chiniquy's book, "[Fifty Years in the Church of Rome](#)."

Abraham Lincoln had not only defended me with the zeal and talent of the ablest lawyer I have ever known, but as the most devoted and noblest friend I ever had. After giving more than a year of his precious time to my defense, when he had pleaded, during two long sessions of the Court of Urbana, without receiving a cent from me, I considered that I was owing him a great sum of money. My two other lawyers, who had not done the half of his work, asked me a thousand dollars each, and I had not thought that too much. After thanking him for the inappreciable services he had rendered me, I requested him to show me his bill, assuring him that, though I would not be able to pay the whole cash, I would pay him to the last cent, if he had the kindness to wait a little for the balance.

He answered me with a smile and an air of inimitable kindness, which was peculiar to him: "My dear Mr. Chiniquy, I feel proud and honoured to have been called to defend you. But I have done it less as a lawyer than as a friend. The money I should receive from you would take away the pleasure I feel at having fought your battle. **Your case is unique in my whole practice. I have never met a man so cruelly persecuted as you have been, and who deserves it so little. Your enemies are devils incarnate. The plot they had concocted against you is the most hellish one I ever knew.** But the way you have been saved from their hands, the appearance of that young and intelligent Miss Moffat, who was really sent by God in the very hour of need, when, I confess it again, I thought everything was nearly lost, is one of the

most extraordinary occurrences I ever saw. It makes me remember what I have too often forgotten, and what my mother often told me when young that our God is a prayer-hearing God. This good thought, sown into my young heart by that dear mother's hand, was just in my mind when I told you, 'Go and pray, God alone can save you.' But I confess to you that I had not faith enough to believe that your prayer would be so quickly and so marvelously answered by the sudden appearance of that interesting young lady, last night. Now let us speak of what you owe me. Well! Well! how much do you owe me? You owe me nothing! for I suppose you are quite ruined. The expenses of such a suit, I know, must be enormous. Your enemies want to ruin you. Will I help them to finish your ruin, when I hope I have the right to be put among the most sincere and devoted of your friends?"

"You are right," I answered him; "you are the most devoted and noblest friend God ever gave me, and I am nearly ruined by my enemies. But you are the father of a pretty large family; you must support them. Your traveling expenses in coming twice here for me from Springfield; your hotel bills during the two terms you have defended me, must be very considerable. It is not just that you should receive nothing in return for such work and expenses."

"Well! well!" he answered, "I will give you a promissory note which you will sign." Taking then a small piece of paper, he wrote:

.Urbana, May 23, 1853

Due A. Lincoln fifty dollars, for value received.

C. Chiniquy

[Above shown in handwriting]

He handed me the note, saying, "Can you sign that?"

After reading it, I said, "Dear Mr. Lincoln, this is a joke. It is not possible that you ask only fifty dollars for services which are worth at least two thousand dollars."

He then tapped me with the right hand on the shoulders and said: "Sign that, it is enough. I will pinch some rich men for that, and make them pay the rest of the bill," and he laughed outright.

When Abraham Lincoln was writing the due-bill, the relaxation of the great strain upon my mind, and the great kindness of my benefactor and defender in charging me so little for such a service, and the terrible presentiment that he would pay with his life what he had done for me caused me to break into sobs and tears.

As Mr. Lincoln had finished writing the due-bill, he turned round to me, and said, "Father Chiniquy, what are you crying for? Ought you not to be the most happy man alive? you have beaten your enemies and gained the most glorious victory, and you will come out of all your troubles in triumph."

"Dear Mr. Lincoln," I answered, "allow me to tell you that the joy I should naturally feel for such a victory is destroyed in my mind by the fear of what it may cost you. There were then **in the crowd not less than ten or twelve Jesuits** from Chicago and St. Louis, who came to hear my sentence of condemnation to the penitentiary. But **it was on their heads that you have brought the thunders of heaven and earth!** nothing can be compared to the expression of their rage against you, when you not only wrenched me from their cruel hands, but you were making the walls of the court-house tremble under the awful and superhumanly eloquent denunciation of their infamy, diabolical malice, and total want of Christian and human principle, in the plot they had formed for my destruction. What troubles my soul just now and draws my tears, is that **it seems to me that I have read your sentence of death in their fiendish eyes.** How many other noble victims have already fallen at their feet!

He tried to divert my mind, at first, with a joke, "Sign this," said he, "**it will be my warrant of death.**"

But after I had signed, he became more solemn, and said, "**I know that Jesuits never forget nor forsake.** But man must not care how and where he dies, provided he dies at the post of honour and duty," and he left me.