

August 11, 1846

In another letter to the Illinois Gazette, President Lincoln, who was running for Congress at the time, answered an attack from a Democratic opponent.

There is . . . one lesson in morals which he might, not without profit, learn of even me—and that is, never to add the weight of his character to a charge against his fellow man, without knowing it to be true. I believe it is an established maxim in morals that he who makes an assertion without knowing whether it is true or false, is guilty of falsehood; and the accidental truth of the assertion does not justify or excuse him. This maxim ought to be particularly held in view, when we contemplate an attack upon the reputation of our neighbor.

Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865)