

From Speech at Springfield, July 17, 1858.

Certainly, the negro is not our equal in color—perhaps not in many other respects; still, in the right to put into his mouth the bread that his own hands have earned, he is the equal of every other man, white or black. In pointing out that more has been given you, you cannot be justified in taking away the little which has been given him.

From Speech at Jonesboro, Ill., Sept. 15, 1858.

All the trouble and convulsions have proceeded from efforts to spread slavery over more territory. It was thus at the date of the Missouri Compromise. It was so again with the annexation of Texas; so with the territory acquired by the Mexican war; and it is so now. Whenever there has been an effort to spread it, there have been agitation and resistance. Now, I appeal to this audience, (very few of whom are my political friends,) as national men, whether we have reason to expect that the agitation in regard to this subject will cease while the causes that tend to reproduce agitation are actually at work. Will not the same cause that produced agitation in 1820, when the Missouri Compromise was formed—that which produced the agitation upon the annexation of Texas, and at other times—work out the same results always? Do you think that the nature of man will be changed—that the same causes that produced agitation at one time will not have the same effect at another?

From Speech at Quincy, Ill., Oct. 13, 1858.

I will say now, that there is a sentiment in the country contrary to me—a sentiment which holds that slavery is not wrong, and therefore it goes for the policy that does not propose dealing with it as a wrong. That policy is the Democratic policy, and that sentiment is the Democratic sentiment.

THE TEXT OF THE CONSTITUTION.

In all three of these places, being the only allusions to slavery in the instrument, covert language is used. Language is used, not suggesting that slavery existed, or that the black race were among us. And I understand the contemporaneous history of those times to be that covert language was used with a purpose, and that purpose was, that in our Constitution, which, it was hoped, and is still hoped, will endure for ever—when it should be read by intelligent and patriotic men, after the institution of slavery had passed from among us, there should be nothing on the face of the great charter of liberty suggesting that such a thing as negro slavery had ever existed among us. This is part of the evidence that the fathers of the Government expected and intended the institution of slavery to come to an end. They expected and intended that it should be in the course of ultimate extinction. And when I say that I desire to see the further spread of it arrested, I only say I desire to see that done which the fathers have first done.

From Letter to Boston Committee, April 6, 1859.

The Democracy of to-day hold the liberty of one man to be absolutely nothing, when in conflict with another man's right of property. Republicans, on the contrary, are both for the man and the dollar, but in case of conflict, the man before the dollar.

This is a world of compensations; and he who would be no slave must consent to have no slave. Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves, and, under a just God, cannot long retain it.

From Letter to German citizens, May 17, 1859.

It is well-known that I deplore the oppressed condition of the blacks; and it would, therefore, be very inconsistent for me to look with approval upon any measures that infringe upon the inalienable rights of white men, whether or not they are born in another land, or speak a different language from my own.

From Speech at Columbus, Ohio, Sept. 1859.

Then, I say, if this principle is established, that there is no wrong in slavery, and whoever wants it has a right to have it, is a matter of dollars and cents—a sort of question as to how they shall deal with brutes; that between us and the negro here there is no sort of question, but that at the South the question is between the negro and the crocodile. That is all. It is a mere matter of policy; there is a perfect right, according to interest, to do just as you please; when this is done, when this doctrine prevails, the miners and sappers will have formed public opinion for the slave-trade. They will be ready for Jeff Davis and Stephens, and other leaders of that company, to sound the bugle for the revival of the slave-trade, for the second Dred Scott decision, for the flood of slavery to be poured over the free States, while we shall be here tied down and helpless, and run over like sheep.

From Speech at Cincinnati, Sept. 1859.

I say, there is room enough for us all to be free, and it is not only wrong to wrong the white man that the negro should be free, but it positively wrongs the mass of white men that the negro should be enslaved; that the mass of white men are really injured by the effects of slave labor in the vicinity of the fields of their own labor.

From Message to Congress of December 1, 1862.

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 ourselves, and then we shall save our country.

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 cannot fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just—a way which, if followed, the world will for ever applaud, and God must for ever bless.

From Message to Congress, Dec. 8, 1863.

But if it be proper to require as a test of admission to the political body an oath of allegiance to the United States, and to the Union under it, why not also to the laws and proclamations in regard to slavery?

Those laws and proclamations were put forth for the purpose of aiding in the suppression of the rebellion. To give them the fullest effect, there had to be a pledge for their maintenance. In my judgment they have aided, and will further aid, the cause for which they were intended.

To now abandon them would be not only to relinquish a lever of power, but would also be a cruel and astounding breach of faith.

I may add, at this point, while I remain in my present position, I shall not attempt to retract or modify the Emancipation Proclamation, nor shall I return to slavery any person who is free by the terms of that Proclamation, or by any of the acts of Congress.

From a Letter to Henry W. Holman, dated Oct. 10, 1864, with reference to the new Constitution of Maryland, abolishing Slavery in that State.

A Convention in Maryland has formed a new Constitution for the State.

A public meeting is called for this evening at Baltimore, to aid in securing its ratification from the people, and you ask a word from me for the occasion. I presume the only feature about which there is serious controversy, is that which provides for the extinction of slavery.

It need not be a secret, and I presume it is not a secret, that I wish success to this provision. I desire it on every consideration. I wish all men free. I wish the material prosperity of the already free, which I feel sure the extinction of slavery would bring. I wish to see in process of disappearance that only thing which could bring this nation to civil war.

From Letter to A. G. Hodges, April 4, 1864.

I attempt no compliment to my sagacity. I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of three years' struggle, the nation's condition is not what either party or any man devised or expected. God alone can claim it. Whether it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills, 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 reverse the justice and goodness of God.

SENTIMENTS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN ON SLAVERY.

From Speech at Springfield, Ill., June 17, 1858.

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 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.

DRED SCOTT CASE THE KNELL OF FREEDOM.

From the same.

Such a decision is all that slavery now lacks of being alike lawful in all the States. Welcome or unwelcome, such decision is probably coming, and will soon be upon us, unless the power of the present political dynasty shall be met and overthrown. We shall lie down pleasantly dreaming that the people of Missouri are on the verge of making their State free, and we shall awake to the reality, instead, that the Supreme Court has made Illinois a slave State. To meet and overthrow the power of that dynasty is the work now before all those who would prevent that consummation. That is what we have to do. How can we best do it?

From Speech at Chicago, July 10, 1858.

I am tolerably well acquainted with the history of the country, and I know that it has endured, eighty-two years, half slave and half free. I believe it has endured, because during all that time, until the introduction of the Nebraska bill, the public mind did rest all that time in the belief that slavery was in the course of ultimate extinction. That was what gave us the rest that we had through that period of eighty-two years; at least, so I believe. I have always hated slavery, I think, as much as any abolitionist.

The American people look upon slavery as a vast moral evil; they can prove it such by the writings of those who gave us the blessings of liberty which we enjoy; and that they so looked upon it, and not as an evil merely confining itself to the States where it is situated.

I protest, now and for ever, against that counterfeited logic which presumes that because I do not want a negro woman for a slave, I do necessarily want her for a wife. My understanding is, that I need not have her for either; but, as God made us separate, we can leave one another alone, and do one another much good thereby. There are white men enough to marry all the white women, and enough black men to marry all the black women: and, in God's name, let them be so married.

Turn in whatever way you will—whether it come from the mouth of a king as an excuse for enslaving the people of his country, or from the mouth of men of one race as a reason for enslaving the men of another race—it is all the same old serpent; and I hold if that course of argumentation that is made, for the purpose of convincing the public mind that we should not care about this, should be granted, it does not stop with the negro. I should like to know if, taking this old Declaration of Independence, which declares that all men are equal upon principle, and making exception to it, where will it stop? If one man says it does not mean a negro, why may not another say it does not mean some other man? If that Declaration is not the truth, let us get the statute-book in which we find it, and tear it out. Who is so bold as to do it?

Let us discard all this quibbling about this man and the other man—this race and that race and the other race being inferior, and therefore they must be placed in an inferior position. Cherishing our standard that we have left us, let us discard all these things, and unite as one people throughout this land, until we shall once more stand up declaring that all men are created equal.

In the debate between Lincoln and Douglas, held at Ottawa, in August, 1858, Mr. Lincoln said:

This declared indifference to, but, as I must think, covert real zeal for the spread of slavery, I cannot but hate. I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence on the world, enables the enemies of free institutions, with plausibility, to taunt us as hypocrites, causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity, and especially because it forces so many really good men among ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty, criticising the Declaration of Independence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but self-interest.