



Assembly of two photos on a symbolic background. Booth and Lincoln apparently posed in the same studio, leaning on the same table covered with the same tablecloth (© Hawkins - Noirsain)

No fur off my dog

By Elizabeth Steger Trindal

It doesn't matter to me if the grave of John Wilkes Booth is marked or not. Since the Surratt Society professes interest in both sides of issues, here is my offering, for whatever it is worth.

If we bring to light what John Wilkes Booth said about his feeling toward the Negro race, then, in all honesty, we must do the same where President Lincoln is concerned on the same subject.

On the issue of slavery, Mr. Lincoln said, in his July 6, 1852, eulogy in Springfield, Illinois, to Henry Clay, that he, like Henry Clay, was *"opposed to slavery in principle, tolerated the practice, and was vigorously against the abolition movement."* Mr. Lincoln continued by saying that Clay, like himself, had a *"deep devotion to the cause of human liberty."* Yet, I add, Mr. Clay had slaves, and was against eliminating the practice. And Lincoln condemned the abolitionists by calling them fanatics who *"would shiver into fragments the Union of these States; tear to tatters its now venerated*

constitution, and even burn the last copy of the Bible, rather than slavery should continue a single hour.”

Mr. Lincoln’s position on colonization of the Negro race: *“A separation of the races is the only perfect preventive of amalgamation, but as immediate separation is impossible the next best thing is to keep them apart where they are not already. Such separation, if ever affected at all, must be affected by colonization. The enterprise is a difficult one, but ‘where there is a will there is a way’ and what colonization needs now is a hearty will. Will springs from the two elements of moral and self-interest. Let us be brought to believe it is morally right, and at the same time, favorable to, or at least not against our interest, to transfer the African to his native clime, and we shall find a way to do it, however great the task may be.”*¹

Mr. Lincoln said that he wanted colonization in Africa. Colonization from the South to the free states had been going on for a long time. For example: Edward Coles, of Albemarle County, Virginia, inherited from his father a large number of slaves. In April 1819, Coles conveyed his human inheritance to Illinois. There he established them on land he had purchased near the town of Edwardsville. He gave each head of family a tract of 160 acres. Mr. Coles, like many other Virginians, who attempted a like emancipation, not only incurred great financial loss resulting from the liberation of his slaves, and the expense of their removal and establishment, but incurred the ill will and opposition of the inhabitants of Mr. Lincoln’s home state of Illinois.²

It would seem that Messrs. Lincoln and Booth were on the same page when in 1859, Abraham Lincoln said the following: *“Negro equality, Fudge !! How long in the Government of a God great enough to make and maintain this Universe, shall there continue to be knaves to vend and fools to gulp, so low a piece of demagoguism as this?”*³

Alexander Stevens, Vice-President of the Confederacy, stated: *“Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery ... is his natural and normal condition.”*⁴

Now, Mr. Lincoln said, *“I will say, then, that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races ... that I am not, nor of qualifying them to hold office, not to intermarry with white people, and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races from living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I, as much as any other man, am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race.”* What kind of freedom is that, I ask?⁵

It is obvious what position Mr. Lincoln had concerning what race was superior to the other, the white, he said. Did not Booth say the very same thing?

One month before the Civil War, for the purpose, we are told, to free the slaves, President Lincoln said his in his this first Inaugural Address, March 4, 1961: *“I have no*

¹ *“Abraham Lincoln at Springfield, Illinois”*, June 26, 1857.

² Beverly B. Munford, *“Virginia’s Attitude Toward Slavery and Secession”* (Longmans, Green, & Co., 91 and 93 Fifth Avenue, New York, London, Bombay, and Calcutta, 1909), pp. 66 & 67.

³ Roy Basler, ed., *“Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln”*, Vol. III, (New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press, 1953) p. 399.

⁴ Ref: *The Surratt Courier*, September 2002, p. 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*

purpose directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists". If we are to believe the president, he believed in the sovereignty of the states (states rights), as plainly written in the Constitution. Where, then, did Alexander Stephens and the president differ? Where is that opposite idea? President Lincoln continued his First Inaugural Address by stating: *"No person held to service or labor in one state under the laws there of, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein; be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service of labor may be due."*

The Emancipation Proclamation of September 22, 1862, was issued. It has gone down in history to prove the virtue of President Lincoln, and the reason for the Civil War, namely to free the slaves. Here is the most important part of that proclamation: *"That on the 1st day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any state or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free ..."*⁶

As it turned out, the following states were to free their slaves: Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana (except 14 parishes, and the city of New Orleans), Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia (except for six counties, and the counties of Northampton, Accomack, Berkeley, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Anne, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth. The following Union states were also exempt: Maryland, Kentucky, West Virginia, Delaware, and Missouri.⁷

The London Spectator remarked: *"The principle (of the proclamation) is not that a human being cannot justly own another, but that he cannot own him unless he is loyal to the United States."*⁸

The Emancipation Proclamation angered most Northerners. The reason for the war had changed. It was no longer to preserve the Union, as my Swiss immigrant great great grandfather, Christian Krebs, fought and died for. Now it was to free black people. The poor whites, many immigrants, and Northern Negroes were scared to death. They were sure the former slaves would come in hordes taking their jobs, housing, and food. To add insult to injury the President wanted still more men in his latest conscription law. Five regiments of troops that had recently fought at Gettysburg were ordered to New York City to quash the riots that had broken out. It has been estimated that 1,000 citizens were shot, and an unknown figure were killed. English Colonel Arthur Fremantle saw the outrage and presented it in his book *"Three Months in the Southern States: The 1863 War Diary of an English Soldier."*

In a letter to Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase, President Lincoln himself admitted that the Proclamation was no more than a war measure, not a genuine endeavor to emancipate the slaves.⁹

Probably the most slanderous remark anyone ever made, including Booth, against the Negro race was what President Lincoln said to Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens at the 1865 Hampton Roads "peace" Conference. When the vice president asked what would become of the freedmen without property or education, the president sarcastically recited the words to a well-known minstrel song, *"root, hog or die."*¹⁰

⁶ J.B. McClure, ed., *"Abe Lincoln's Stories and Speeches"*, (Rhodes & McClure Publishing, Chicago, 1897) p. 443.

⁷ Thomas J. DiLorenzo, p. 36.

⁸ Ibid p. 36.

⁹ Thomas J. DiLorenzo, p. 37.

¹⁰ Ref: Alexander Stephens, *"A Constitutional View of the Late War between the States"*, (Philadelphia: National Publishing Co., 1870).

Napoleon Bonaparte once said: “*What is history but a fable agreed upon?*” Samuel Butler remarked, “*God cannot alter the past, but historians can*”. Aldous Huxley said, “*Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you mad*”. I say, “*I hope I didn’t make anyone too mad.*” And as Mr. Hall says, “*Cheers.*”



Extract of Lincoln's Proclamation of Emancipation (Maryland Historical Society)