



Lincoln Lore

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MISCEGENATION: BROAD FARCE OR POLITICAL DIRTY TRICK?

(Continued from the last issue)

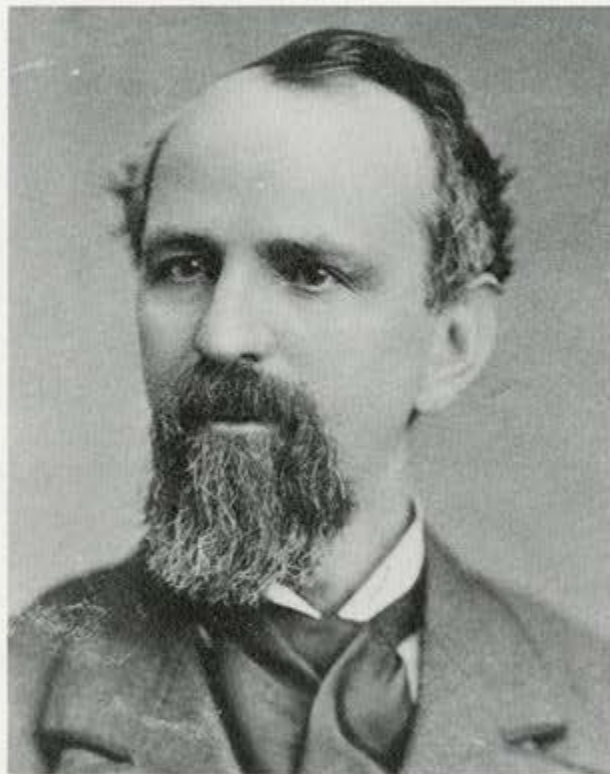
III. Racism and Science

Bloch's subtle interpretation of *Miscegenation* as a paradoxical attack on abolitionism and scientific racism depends heavily on hindsight; in particular, it reflects the twentieth-century historian's lack of respect for nineteenth-century "science." Much that passed for science in the 1860's seems laughable today, but to characterize it as pseudo-science is to make an essentially ahistorical judgment. In the largely unprofessionalized chaos of nineteenth-century science, it is not easy to distinguish what would have been seen by contemporaries as nonsense from what seemed like the empirical wave of the future.

From what is known today of the state of nineteenth-century scientific thought on race, it can be said that the theory of monogenesis was being replaced by the theory of polygenesis (to be replaced after the 1860's by monogenesis bolstered by Darwinian science). Monogenesis was the theory embraced by eighteenth-century science and by nineteenth-century religion. As George M. Fredrickson summarizes the theory, "All the races of man, . . . were members of the same species and had a common remote ancestry; differences in color, anatomy, intelligence, temperament, and morality could be attributed to differing physical and social environments, especially climate and the contrasting habits of life produced by 'savagery' and 'civilization.'" Nineteenth-century religion (perhaps ironically) embraced eighteenth-century science because it satisfied the requirement of Biblical fundamentalism that all men be the progeny of Adam and Eve. Before the Civil War, monogenesis was challenged by what is sometimes called "the American school of ethnology," which argued, again as Fredrickson puts it, "that the races of mankind had been separately created as distinct and unequal species."

The very first paragraph of *Miscegenation* announced its perhaps backward-looking view of science:

The teachings of physiology



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

FIGURE I. Samuel Sullivan Cox (1824 - 1889) almost single-handedly made Croly and Wakeman's pamphlet famous by reading excerpts from it into the debate in Congress over a bill to create the Freedmen's Bureau. At least by 1865, the year when he published a collection of his speeches entitled *Eight Years in Congress, from 1857-1865*, Cox knew that the pamphlet had "turned out to be apocryphal." Even then, Cox defended his speech by saying, "So congenial were its [the pamphlet's] sentiments with those of the leading Abolitionists, and so ingeniously was its irony disguised, that it was not only indorsed by the fanatical leaders all over the land, but no one in Congress thought of questioning the genuineness and seriousness of the document." Cox's statement was untrue, for Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, one of the few states which did not outlaw miscegenation, thought the pamphlet was a hoax. Cox himself may have known of the pamphlet's true origins from the first; as a prominent national leader of the Democratic party he had close ties with one of that party's principal public organs, the *New York World*. Cox had served as his Ohio district's congressman since 1857. Despite his extreme racial opinions, and his friendship with Clement Vallandigham, Cox was a leader of the moderate wing of the Democratic party and delivered a speech seconding the nomination of George B. McClellan for president in 1864. The picture of Cox was taken in 1876.

as well as the inspirations of Christianity settle the question that all the tribes which inhabit the earth were originally derived from one type. Whether or not the story of Adam and Eve is accepted by all as absolutely true, the fact which it represents has been demonstrated by history, and by the latest discoveries bearing upon the origin of the human family.

The principal assertions of monogenesis were present in simple statements:

. . . despite skull, color, structure, the race is essentially one, and the differences depend wholly upon climate and circumstances . . . There is no fact better established in the physical history of man than that color depends primarily upon temperature.

These assumptions were buttressed by brief references to scientific authorities. As Forrest Wood points out, "the most progressive thinking in European ethnology tended to support the unity of mankind, minimized the importance of physical differences among races, and even recognized that most cultural differences could not be attributed to physical traits." By citing European authorities, Croly and Wakeman may have been invoking the return to monogenesis theories in Europe which preceded the American return after the Civil War. Whatever the case, the "science" was not immediately recognized as laughable and old-fashioned, if for no other reason than that religious apologists and abolitionists in America were reluctant to embrace polygenesis.

What seemed preposterous to scientific authorities was the application of the science, not the science itself. Neither monogenesis nor polygenesis argued that race-mixing improved the human race. This leap was meant by the pamphleteers to be seen as an abolitionist leap of faith. Thus *Miscegenation* did not consciously parody pseudo-scientific racism. It confined its attack to abolitionism (and licentious slaveholders) because the pamphlet was written by northern believers in nineteenth-century

racism.

Polygenesis and monogenesis were objects of lively scientific controversy; they were too obscure to have been the basis of popular humor. The pamphlet depended for its humor on more sensational affronts to the acceptable social and political mores of the day. The "science" was merely an atmospheric trapping of argumentative pamphlets and not itself a signpost warning the reader that the argument was absurd nor an ever-so-subtle jab at the abolitionists' opponents who established the "American school of ethnology."

Perhaps an example from *Miscegenation* will suffice to show the pamphlet's attitude towards scientific racism. In arguing his case for the "Love of the Blondes for the Black," Croly's supposed abolitionist cited the examples of three fair-haired abolitionists devoted to the cause of the black man, Horace Greeley, Wendell Phillips, and Theodore Tilton (see Figure II). By contrast, said the authors of *Miscegenation*, those "few men of dark skin, and eyes, and hair . . . found among the anti-slavery leaders" were animated by "not so much the love of the negro . . . as hatred of the slaveholder." The authors then cited dark-haired Owen Lovejoy, who "hates the South because the slaveholders murdered his brother." When Samuel S. Cox read this section of the pamphlet in Congress, it was greeted by frequent bursts of laughter. It was laughable because it was pseudo-science, not because it showed the prevalent scientific arguments about race to be absurd. The joke was on the supposed abolitionist author and his slipshod and ludicrous generalizing; the joke was not on the scientific racist who based his theories (sometimes, as in the case of Samuel George Morton at least) on comparative studies of skulls gathered from around the world. The implication of *Miscegenation* was that only a transparently silly generalization could make a case for miscegenation. Real science knew much better.

IV. Significance

These three dissents from Professor Bloch's argument notwithstanding, it remains by and large the treatment of *Miscegenation* which most accurately appraises the tone of the pamphlet and the tone of the succeeding controversy over its doctrines. Surely Bloch's appraisal is more accurate than Forrest Wood's humorlessly flat assertion that "it was written by two racists in an effort to discredit the Republican party," though that is certainly true. Croly and Wakeman could have caused more damage had they indulged in less humor.

Sidney Kaplan's article on the pamphlet, "The Miscegenation Issue in the Election of 1864," errs in its emphasis on the pamphlet as a serious campaign issue, but it quotes a good deal of evidence to the effect that the pamphlet was widely regarded as a hoax. Kaplan, in fact, submits evidence which undermines one of Bloch's erroneous assumptions. Bloch attributes the pamphlet's sensational notice to the gullibility of extremists, both pro-slavery extremists like the anthropologist Dr. John H. Van Evrie and "eminent" abolitionists (whose "glowing endorsements of the work" were most important in assuring its fame). The joke, according to Bloch, was on both extremes. Kaplan, however, cites some very interesting contradictory evidence. Croly sent a selected list of prominent anti-slavery leaders advance copies of the pamphlet in hopes that he would gain their endorsements for the work. The Grimké sisters, James McCune Smith, Lucretia Mott, Parker Pillsbury, and Albert Brisbane all sent sympathetic replies. Though historians of Professor Bloch's generation were wont to criticize the abolitionists for their lack of "pragmatism," it is interesting to note that *all but one also thought the pamphlet was impolitic and some questioned the wisdom of its publication at the moment*. The one exception, Parker Pillsbury, had enough practical sense to warn that his own endorsement would doom the pamphlet rather than help it. Moreover, Wendell Phillips, Charles Sumner, and two others did not reply to the letter accompanying the pamphlet which solicited their responses. Charles Sumner, according to one anti-slavery newspaper, was of the opinion "upon first glancing over its pages" that "the writer was in jest." Though Sumner's none-too-sympathetic biographer, David Donald, finds him a humorless man, Sumner in this one instance at least recognized a

parody when he saw it. Despite Professor Bloch's dislike of political extremes, the propensity to be gulled was not a function of one's position on the political spectrum.

Another significant aspect of the *Miscegenation* controversy which has escaped notice to date is the proof that the pamphlet gives of the importance of the use of black soldiers in the Civil War. This policy (more even than emancipation itself) guaranteed the black man's future in America. Croly and Wakeman noted this:

Under the ordinance of nature, confirmed by the solemn act of President Lincoln, in the emancipation proclamation, there are no slaves to-day in law at the South . . . This is the first step towards the redemption of the black and his absorption with the white. The second step is in making him a soldier of the United States. If he has fought beside the white, if he has spent his blood for the common country, the most ordinary sense of justice will revolt at the idea of remanding him back to slavery, or of denying him any opportunity or right accorded to his white comrade.

The pamphleteers might have added that it guaranteed his not being asked to leave the "common country" as well; black military service, more than anything else, meant that colonization schemes were, as the pamphlet said elsewhere, "stillborn." Miscegenation would have been hard to contemplate even in jest without Lincoln's revolutionary acceptance of black soldiers.

There was a time when the Civil War was thought of as a basically conservative experience. After all, it was fought to *save* the Union. However, truly revolutionary times are marked as much by the gift of neologisms to the language as by anything else. The French Revolution, according to R.R. Palmer, gave the language the use of such words as "democrat" and "aristocrat." The Dreyfus Affair gave the language the term "intellectuals" to describe a newly professionalized class which found its political voice in protest against anti-semitism. "Miscegenation" was like "intellectual" in being an essentially pejorative term, but it found currency in the language because the Civil War marked the beginning of a revolution in American race relations.

SALE ITEMS

Copies of the *Lincoln Lore* Index covering bulletins One to Fifteen Hundred (April 15, 1929 to February, 1963) are still available at a cost of two dollars.

The 51-page index is divided into three parts, namely, "Titles of Bulletins," "Index to Subjects" and "Index to Persons."

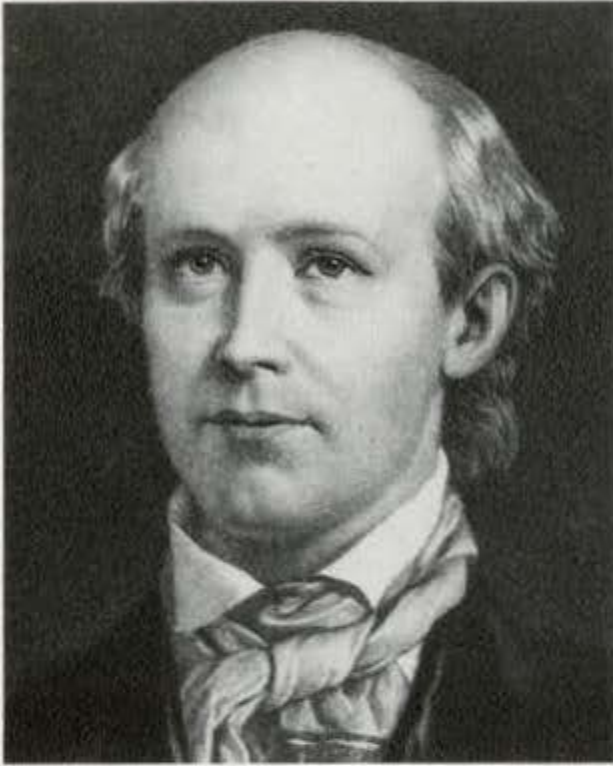
Checks or money orders should accompany the orders and should be mailed to the Lincoln National Life Foundation, 1301 South Harrison Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801.

In addition, the book which Professor Frank L. Klement has recently characterized as "the best secondary account" of the Gettysburg Address and the events surrounding it can be purchased from the Lincoln National Life Foundation. Louis A. Warren's *Lincoln's Gettysburg Declaration: "A New Birth of Freedom"* (Fort Wayne: Lincoln National Life Foundation, 1964) can be purchased for \$5.95. Also available is Warren's *Lincoln's Youth: Indiana Years, Seven to Twenty-one, 1816-1830* (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1959). Dr. Warren was the first director of the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

Indiana residents must include four percent sales tax on all the above items.

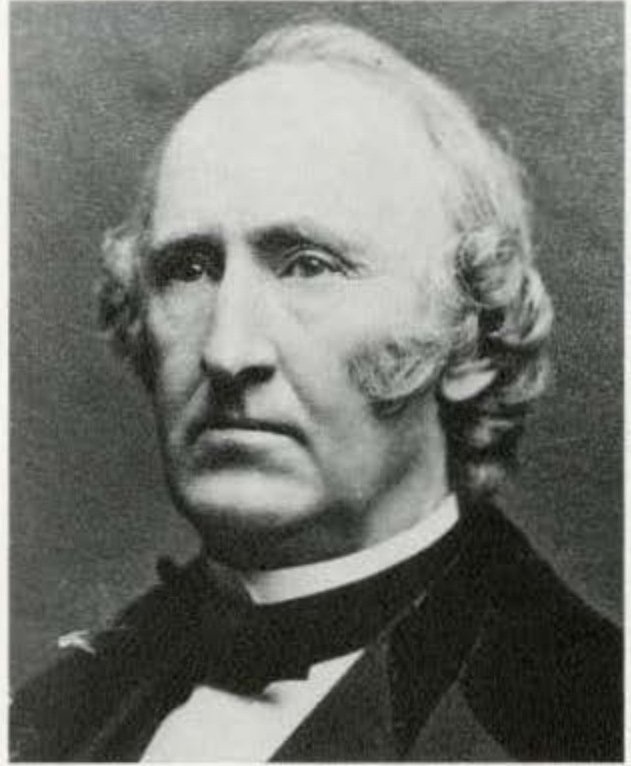
A CORRECTION AND A REQUEST

Lincoln Lore Number 1634 incorrectly identified the author of *The War Powers of the President* as George Whiting. It should, of course, be William Whiting. George Whiting was one of the two lawyers whom Lincoln asked to go over General Pope's list of Sioux Indians in 1862 to determine which were guilty of rape and murder and which had merely been military combatants. Incidentally, previous efforts to uncover sources of information on William Whiting have led nowhere. Beyond a few letters at Harvard, the editor has been unable to find anything. Any help which readers of *Lincoln Lore* can give will be much appreciated.



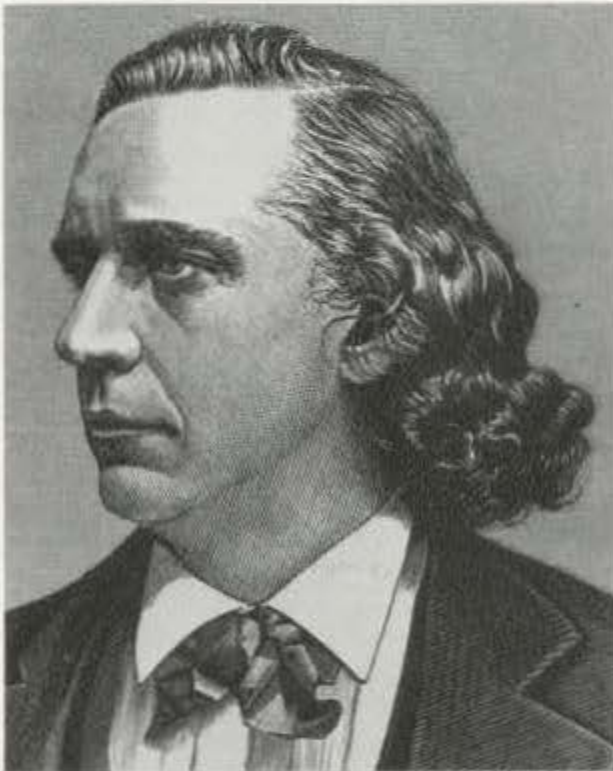
From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Horace Greeley



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Wendell Phillips



From the New-York Historical Society, New York City

Theodore Tilton



From the Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield

Owen Lovejoy

FIGURE II. Croly and Wakeman described Horace Greeley, Wendell Phillips, and Theodore Tilton as blondes who loved the black. The men do appear to be rather fair-haired in these pictures, but it was not possible to obtain good enough pictures taken early enough in the men's lives to ascertain hair color for sure. Owen Lovejoy was described as a dark-haired hater of white Southerners whom he blamed for the murder of his brother, Elijah Lovejoy, in Alton, Illinois, in 1837. Actually, Lovejoy was murdered by an anti-abolition mob composed of Northerners who sympathized with the South. Of the three fair-haired abolitionists, Horace Greeley and Theodore Tilton fell for the hoax to some degree, but Wendell Phillips chose not to answer the letter seeking his comments on the pamphlet.

Lincoln Historiography: News and Notes

Beginning with this issue, *Lincoln Lore* initiates a policy of commenting on recent developments in the Lincoln field — by way of telling where new developments may be heard and by way of correcting the inadequacies of classification schemes for Lincolniana. When possible, *Lincoln Lore* will report the results of historical conferences; it will also report the availability of future conferences. A case in point is The National Historical Society's Abraham Lincoln assembly to be held in Springfield, Illinois on September 21-23, 1974. In addition to tours of Lincoln-related sites, participants can hear Professor T. Harry Williams (on Lincoln), Professor Mary Elizabeth Massey (on Mary Todd Lincoln), and John P. Frank (on Lincoln's legal career). Information on cost and reservations is available from The National Historical Society, 206 Hanover Street, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania 17325.

The traditional limitations on classification of Lincolniana are rather narrow and capricious. Monaghan's bibliography, for example, is notorious for excluding articles on Lincoln from magazines and scholarly journals. The *Lincoln Lore* bibliography lists only articles that are given to the Lincoln National Life Foundation in off-print form or issues of magazines and journals devoted entirely to Lincoln. Even in the latter case (as, for example, *Lincoln Herald*), articles are not listed by title. Moreover, nothing but a wide-ranging critical bibliography could include books and articles in which there is significant information about Lincoln even though the work itself does not focus primarily upon Lincoln. Many such books and articles deserve notice, even though they may not classify technically as Lincolniana.

For example, James A. Rawley's *The Politics of Union: Northern Politics during the Civil War* (Hinsdale, Illinois: Dryden Press, 1974) is the sole single-volume study of national politics while Lincoln was president. Professor Rawley's work is fast becoming the locus classicus of the case for Lincoln's being more a nationalist than a humanitarian. *The Politics of Union* thus supplements Rawley's article on "The Nationalism of Abraham Lincoln" which appeared in *Civil War History*, IX (September, 1963), 283-298. In addition to synthesizing the most recent scholarship on Civil War politics, Rawley's book analyzes many of Lincoln's state papers. Rawley's book is stronger on the war's early years, and the last part of the book seems almost hastily done. This, in addition to the nationalistic theme, causes him to rely heavily on the work of Ludwell Johnson in his treatment of Lincoln in 1864 and 1865. Johnson's work ("Lincoln and Equal Rights: The Authenticity of the Wadsworth Letter," *Journal of Southern History*, XXXII [1966], 83-87 and "Lincoln's Solution to the Problem of Peace Terms, 1864-1865," *Journal of Southern History*, XXXIV [1968], 576-586) is not, I think, unanswerable; however, it is the work that must be answered by those who would argue the opposite of Rawley's position. The theme and seeming haste also cause Rawley to slight new interpretations like Herman Belz's (*Reconstructing the Union: Theory and Policy during the Civil War* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969]) in regard to Lincoln's plans for reconstructing the South. On the whole, however, the volume is judicious, enormously informative, and long needed.

Paul David Nelson makes a nifty point about Lincoln's last speech in "From Intolerance to Moderation: The Evolution of Abraham Lincoln's Racial Views," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, LXXII (January, 1974), 1-9. Nelson refutes Ludwell Johnson's assertion that Lincoln's last speech was meant to apply to Louisiana alone by pointing out that "the President flatly asserted in his speech that 'what has been said of Louisiana will apply generally to other [former Confederate] states.'" Nelson did not know it, but he also blunted the assertion made by Professor George M. Fredrickson at the Lincoln Symposium in Springfield last February that Lincoln's Louisiana plan was unique and possibly based on the fact (peculiar to that state) of a large, highly educated mulatto population. Gabor S. Borit reprints "A New Lincoln Text: An Opinion on an Illinois Tax" with his own acute comments on Lincoln's financial sophistication and practical avoidance of legal abstraction in the *Lincoln Herald* (Winter, 1973), 152-157.

The annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians in Denver in April witnessed two suggestive

overviews of the era of Abraham Lincoln. Professor Eric Foner of City College, City University of New York, delivered a very distinguished paper on two recent developments in the study of "The Coming of the Civil War." First, the "new political history," he suggested, has given historians a picture of northern antebellum society characterized by a split between political elites, increasingly anti-southern in their beliefs, and the voting masses, largely unmoved by sectional or slavery issues and more concerned by problems like temperance and immigration. Historians applying tools of quantification borrowed from social science have thus substituted Religious Man for the old-fashioned Economic Man of the now-passe' Progressive historians, said Foner. Historians are left with serious problems in accounting for the Civil War. If only the elites cared about slavery, then the Civil War is explicable only as the conspiracy of some small and sinister group, like the old "Slave Power" found in histories written after the war by former abolitionists. Not the least of the difficulties, too, is Abraham Lincoln, who, as a southern-born religious skeptic rather than a northern pietist, would be a pro-slavery Democrat by the lights of the new political history.

Second, some historians have been treating the Civil War as an aspect of "modernization," the way the North integrated the pre-modern South into a modern economic system. The virtues of this interpretation, according to Foner, are that it punctures the myth of American exceptionalism, fitting this country and its civil war into the scheme of world history, and that it puts political events into the context of society at large. Its vice is that "modernization" is never fully defined and frequently borders on connoting the old Beardian interpretation of the war as a war between an industrial and an agrarian society. "Modernization" does help explain, said Foner, why slavery, deemed a normal institution by most of Western culture for centuries, suddenly seemed abnormal. Answer: the anti-slavery ideology, held as far back in time as the Federalist Era in New England, fed on the anti-monopoly ethos of the Jacksonian era rather than the organic vision of a hierarchical society held by the old Federalists. Yet Foner added at least one caveat: Lincoln's Union was a nation of self-made men; if he exalted "modernizing" economic growth, it was only within the conceptions of a familiar social order of independent artisans and yeomen. He did not really look forward to a technocratic, industrialized society. Professor Foner's paper was richly suggestive, as I hope even this brief summary of it shows, and every historian of Lincoln's era will be immensely benefited if he publishes it.

Professor Richard O. Curry of the University of Connecticut summarized recent developments in the literature on the Civil War and Reconstruction. Curry stressed that the politics of the Civil War and Reconstruction periods are coming increasingly to be viewed as a unit, that the conservative Democrats were not traitors or disunionists but racists and economic and constitutional conservatives (cf. *Lincoln Lore* Numbers 1632 and 1633 for treatments of these themes and criticism of some of Curry's own work), and that Lincoln's role as a war leader has been underestimated. In particular, Curry urged historians to view Lincoln's actions in the context of political events: (1) as soon as the 1862 elections showed that the Republicans would retain control of the government, he acted in accordance with his sincere liberal opinions on the slavery issue; (2) his famous letter to Horace Greeley explaining that his actions on the slavery question were utterly subordinate to his overriding concern for the Union (the key Lincoln document for James Rawley's interpretation, incidentally) actually warned the North that emancipation was coming; (3) the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation did not embody a serious belief that the South would surrender before January but put a moderate front on a radical action; and (4) Lincoln never mentioned colonization after the success of the 1863 elections because, with success, he no longer needed a conservative mask for his sincere, liberal convictions. Historians would benefit from publication of Curry's paper as well and, more especially, from amplification and publication of his interesting approach to studying Abraham Lincoln as a war leader.