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## LINCOLN AND DANIEL WEBSTER

BY RICHARD N. CURRENT

TODAY Abraham Lincoln is well remembered—in Lincoln Day addresses and otherwise—while Daniel Webster has become by comparison almost a forgotten man. The two were not always so far apart in the memory of the American people. In 1900, when judges for the new Hall of Fame at New York University chose the greatest American of all time, George Washington was still first in the hearts of his countrymen with ninety-seven votes, and Abraham Lincoln and Daniel Webster were tied for second with ninety-six apiece.<sup>1</sup>

Though Webster's and Lincoln's careers overlapped, their personal acquaintance was slight and, whether as human beings or as political symbols, their differences were striking. The one was known as the Godlike Daniel and the Defender of the Constitution, but he was known also as the defender of the moneyed interest of the North and, on occasion, of the

<sup>1</sup> Claude M. Fuess, *Daniel Webster* (2 vols., Boston, 1930), II: 375. For Webster's reputation and his significance for our time, see also Richard N. Current, *Daniel Webster and the Rise of National Conservatism* (Boston, 1955), 184-202.

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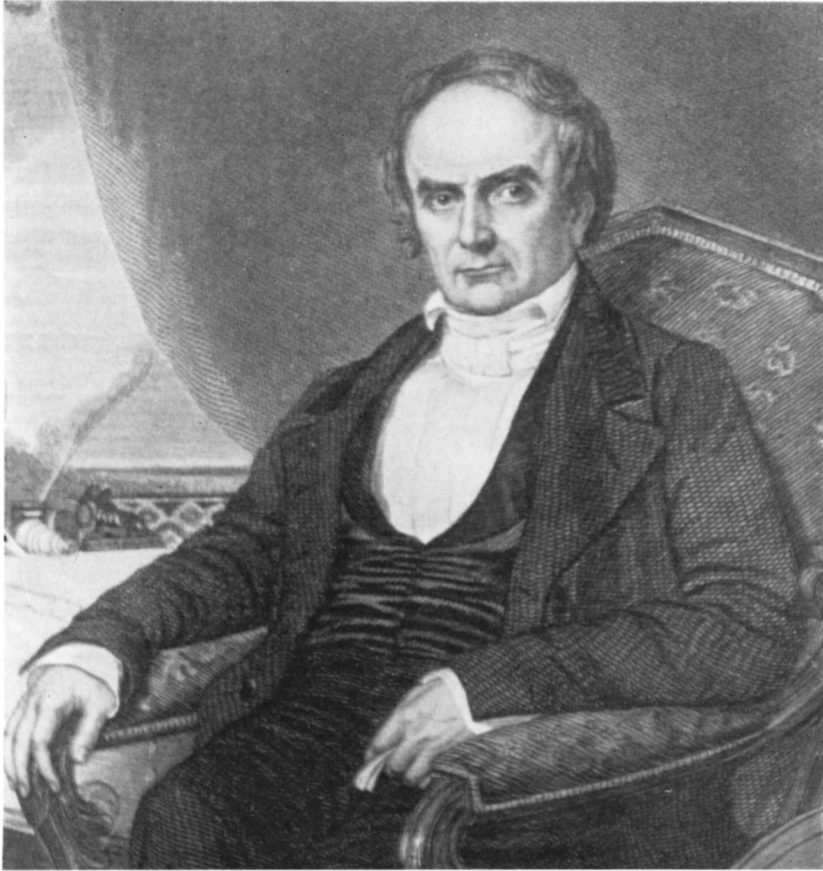
slavery interest of the South. The other was known as Honest Abe, the friend of the common people, the Great Emancipator of the slaves. The high-living Webster, with his leonine head and his stately manner, had the appearance of greatness even after his eating and drinking habits had made him paunchy. The abstemious Lincoln, with his long arms and legs and his gawky figure, so easy to caricature, always looked pretty much like what he once had been, a small-town politician from the prairies.

The dissimilarities between them could be multiplied, but it is more to the point to consider what they had in common. If Webster was a corporation lawyer, Lincoln also served as counsel for such corporations as the Illinois Central and Ohio & Mississippi railroads; and if Lincoln rode the rural circuit in his state, so did Webster in his, as a young attorney in New Hampshire. In politics Webster was a Federalist and then a Whig, Lincoln a Whig and then a Republican. Both men, as conservatives, were generally moderate and conciliatory in their approach to public issues. And Lincoln was often influenced by Webster's example and precept.

The story of their relationship divides naturally into three periods. In the first, Webster is a famous man and Lincoln a comparative nobody who admires him from afar as an orator second to none and a party leader second only to Henry Clay. In the next, Lincoln is a rising politician who tries to identify his own cause with that of the dead Webster and thus benefit from the latter's reputation. In the final phase, Lincoln himself is the great man, finding inspiration in the words of Webster as he faces the challenge of Civil War statesmanship.

. . . .

During the early 1830's, while Webster in Washington engaged in verbal duels with the South Carolina nullifiers, Lincoln in New Salem followed the debates and read with special admiration the glorious Reply to Hayne, which con-



DANIEL WEBSTER—from a portrait by George P. A. Healy

cluded with that line once familiar to every schoolboy: “Liberty *and* Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!” Then, while Webster and the Whigs in the Senate argued with President Jackson’s followers over the bank question, Lincoln and the Whigs in the legislature at Vandalia echoed the argument. In 1836, when Webster was one of three Whig candidates for the presidency, Lincoln and his colleagues endorsed the whole of their party’s tricephalous ticket, though it

was a rather forlorn campaign for Webster and the Whigs.<sup>2</sup>

The next year Lincoln had his first opportunity to meet the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts. On a tour of the West, Webster visited Springfield, which, largely due to Lincoln's efforts, had just been made the capital of Illinois. As a local party leader, Lincoln was presumably one of the hosts at the barbecue in Porter's Grove, where Webster delighted the crowd with some of the eloquence he always seemed to have on tap. Very likely he and Lincoln had interesting things to say to one another in private conversation, but there is no record of what, if anything, they said.<sup>3</sup>

Four years later Webster, as Secretary of State, had his hands full of applications for jobs in the foreign service, one of them submitted in Lincoln's behalf. Lincoln was then a despairing would-be bridegroom who had broken his engagement to Mary Todd. His law partner, Congressman John T. Stuart, apparently thinking a change of scenery would be good for him, wrote to the Secretary of State to recommend Lincoln's appointment as chargé d'affaires in Bogotá, Colombia. No appointment ever came through. Lincoln remained in Springfield and married Miss Todd on November 4, 1842.

Five years after that, in 1847, Lincoln went to Washington as the lone Whig congressman from Illinois and renewed his acquaintance with Webster, now back in the Senate. According to the gossipy Washington journalist Benjamin Perley Poore, Webster remembered Lincoln as an attorney who had searched some Illinois land titles for him and had charged only ten dollars, which Webster repeatedly insisted was so small a fee it left him still in debt to Lincoln. Senator Webster also "used occasionally to have Mr. Lincoln at one of his pleasant

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<sup>2</sup> Paul M. Angle, ed., *Herndon's Life of Lincoln* (Cleveland and New York, 1949), 386; Harry E. Pratt, *Lincoln 1809-1839* (Springfield, 1941), 49; Albert J. Beveridge, *Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1858* (2 vols., Boston and New York, 1928), I: 168, 171.

<sup>3</sup> Fuess, *Webster*, II: 64; Pratt, *Lincoln 1809-1839*, p. 86.

<sup>4</sup> Fuess, *Webster*, II: 94, 94n.

Saturday breakfasts, where the Western Congressman's humorous illustrations of the events of the day, sparkling with spontaneous and unpremeditated wit, would give great delight to 'the solid men of Boston' assembled around the festive board."<sup>5</sup>

Congressman Lincoln and Senator Webster saw eye to eye on the Polk administration and the Mexican War. Both of these Whigs, along with others of their party, denounced the war and condemned the President for having started it. In a House speech of July 27, 1848, which he revised as a campaign pamphlet, Lincoln insisted that the Whigs were nevertheless patriotic. They, he said, not only had voted war supplies but also had sent their own sons to war. "Clay and Webster," he noted, "each gave a son, never to be returned."<sup>6</sup>

But Lincoln and Webster did not agree when it came to choosing a Whig successor to the Democrat Polk. Lincoln was an early and enthusiastic advocate of the Whig general and hero of Buena Vista, Zachary Taylor. "Our only chance is with Taylor," he wrote a friend. "I go for him, not because I think he would make a better president than Clay, but because I think he would make a better one than Polk, or Cass, or Buchanan, or any such creatures, one of whom is sure to be elected, if he is not." Lincoln went to Philadelphia to do what he could for Taylor at the national convention, and stumped wholeheartedly for the candidate after Taylor had won the nomination. Webster, on the other hand, condemned Taylor as merely a military man with no political experience, and called the nomination "not fit to be made." Only during the closing days of the campaign did he speak out for the candidate, and even then his praise was faint indeed.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Perley Poore in Allen T. Rice, ed., *Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln by Distinguished Men of His Time* (8th ed., New York, 1889), 222.

<sup>6</sup> Roy P. Basler, Marion Dolores Pratt and Lloyd A. Dunlap, eds., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (Abraham Lincoln Assn. ed., 8 vols., New Brunswick, N.J., 1953), I: 515. I am indebted to Mrs. Pratt for providing from the index, then in manuscript, all references to Webster in the *Collected Works*.

<sup>7</sup> Lincoln to Jesse Lynch, Apr. 10, 1848, *ibid.*, I: 463; Beveridge, *Lincoln*; I: 441-42; Current, *Webster*, 154-56.

His term in Congress over and Taylor inaugurated, Lincoln desperately wanted a federal job as commissioner of the General Land Office. But there were four other Illinois Whigs after the job, foremost among them Justin Butterfield, a Chicagoan who had not been, like Lincoln, an early and zealous Taylorite. Lincoln became angry when he learned that Butterfield had the backing of both Webster and Clay. "It will now mortify me deeply if Gen. Taylor's administration shall trample all my wishes in the dust merely to gratify these men," he wrote to a friend.<sup>8</sup> The man whom Clay and Webster recommended got the job, and Lincoln never quite forgave either of his Whig heroes.

At the moment Lincoln was a thoroughly frustrated politician, the outlook for him very black. Within the next few years, however, Webster was to suffer a more bitter and more final frustration, dying as he missed his last chance for the presidency. And Lincoln, advancing to the goal that Webster never reached, was to make political capital out of Webster's reputation as an advocate of American solidarity and sectional compromise.

Throughout the 1850's the American people discussed with growing heat the question of slavery in the territories, and eventually they divided and went to war over it. The Compromise of 1850 had supposedly put this question to rest by leaving the people of New Mexico and Utah, the only territories whose status was still unsettled, to decide for themselves whether they should become free or slave. Clay originally introduced the compromise proposals, and both he and Webster eloquently supported them—the latter in his Seventh of March speech, in which he said Congress need not act to keep slavery out of the territories, since God had already done so by creating geographical conditions unsuited to the "pecul-

<sup>8</sup> Beveridge, *Lincoln*, I: 487-90; Lincoln to Josiah M. Lucas, Apr. 25, 1849, *Collected Works*, II: 43-44.

iar institution” of the South. While Webster was execrated by the abolitionists of New England, the Compromise and its sponsors were generally approved in Illinois and the Old Northwest.

Lincoln, in his effort to rise by capitalizing upon the popularity of the Compromise, had to contend against a better known and more influential politician from his own state—the Little Giant, Stephen A. Douglas. In 1854 Senator Douglas, the chief exponent of “popular sovereignty” in the territories, put through Congress his Kansas-Nebraska bill which extended that principle to the unorganized territory of the Louisiana Purchase, previously closed to slavery by Congress in the Missouri Compromise. Douglas thus revived the whole dangerous issue. In the Northwest a violent reaction against his Kansas-Nebraska measure led directly to the formation of the Republican Party. He protested that he was carrying on in the spirit of the Compromise of 1850, but Lincoln and others contradicted him. Douglas the Democrat and Lincoln the Republican both sought votes by appealing to the memory of the departed Whig statesmen, and each claimed to be the true disciple of Webster and of Clay.

This argument had begun at least as early as the presidential campaign of 1852, when there still was a Whig Party and Webster was still alive. At that time Lincoln accused Douglas of falsely crediting the Democrats with the Compromise and brazenly stealing Clay’s and Webster’s ideas. In 1854, after his Kansas-Nebraska Act had aroused such widespread opposition, Douglas put his own emphasis upon the bipartisan nature of the Compromise, saying it had been the work both of Whigs like Clay and Webster and of Democrats like Lewis Cass. Lincoln complained: “The Judge [Douglas] invokes against me, the memory of Clay and of Webster.” Lincoln went on to say that they were great men but were on *his* side, not on Douglas’. He asked: “For what is it, that their life-long enemy, shall now make profit, by assuming to defend



them against me, their life-long friend?" And he answered his own query: "The truth is that some support from whigs is now a necessity with the Judge, and for thus it is, that the names of Clay and Webster are now invoked." Again in 1856, when he was stumping for John C. Frémont, the first Republican presidential candidate, Lincoln countered Douglas by aligning himself on the side of the old Whigs. A Democratic newspaper reporter, dropping in on one of Lincoln's campaign talks at Petersburg, "heard him pronouncing, with thundering emphasis, a beautiful passage from Webster's compromise speech, and that, too, *without the quotations*."<sup>9</sup>

This same contest for identification with Clay and Webster ran through the Lincoln-Douglas campaign of 1858. "It would be amusing, if it were not disgusting, to see how quick these compromise-breakers administer on the political effects of their dead adversaries, trumping up claims never before heard of, and dividing the assets among themselves," Lincoln exclaimed in a speech at Springfield before the formal debates began. Then in the first joint debate at Ottawa, Douglas came back at his opponent by asserting that not he but Lincoln was the compromise-breaker. "Lincoln went to work to dissolve the Old Line Whig party," Douglas resumed in the second debate at Freeport. "Clay was dead, and although the sod was not yet green on his grave, this man undertook to bring into disrepute those great compromise measures of 1850, with which Clay and Webster were identified." In appearances by himself at Tremont and Carlinville Lincoln denied Douglas' charges and repeated that he stood exactly where Clay and Webster had taken their stand. In the third joint debate at Jonesboro Douglas returned to the attack, and in the fourth at Charleston he elaborated by saying that "No sooner was the rose planted on the tomb of the Godlike Webster" than Lincoln and others tried to abolitionize the good old Whig Party.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, II: 121-32 (Lincoln's eulogy on Clay, who died June 29, 1852), 137-38, 282, 367, 370.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, II: 519; III: 2-3, 61, 77, 102-3, 168-71, 270.

To the very last—on through his defeat for the presidency in 1860—Douglas stuck to his position that “popular sovereignty” should prevail in the territories. But Lincoln and the Republicans did *not* forever hold to *their* principle that slavery must be excluded from the territories by act of Congress. Early in 1861 Republican majorities in both houses passed, and Lincoln as President signed, laws which set up territorial governments in Colorado, Dakota and Nevada without any prohibition of slavery. The assumption was that slavery would not go into these territories in any case; but that had been Douglas’ assumption all along, as it had earlier been Webster’s. Even such a Republican of Republicans as James G. Blaine afterward saw the territorial legislation of 1861 as a triumph not only for Webster but also for Douglas.<sup>11</sup>

Neither Webster nor Clay was individually responsible for the Compromise of 1850, for that was essentially a bipartisan achievement. Douglas himself, more than any other one man, engineered the final passage of the Compromise bills, and they were carried through by the overwhelming vote of the Democrats as well as the Whigs. The roles of Clay and Webster were afterward so much exaggerated as to become almost mythological.<sup>12</sup> The man who was mainly responsible for the Compromise itself was also largely responsible for the misconceptions regarding it. Douglas used the great Whig reputations in an effort to attract old Whigs to the Democratic Party and prevent Lincoln from drawing them to the Republican Party. Spurred on by Lincoln, he so minimized his own role of 1850 that he distorted history and dimmed his own reputation.

<sup>11</sup> James G. Blaine, *Twenty Years of Congress: from Lincoln to Garfield* (2 vols., Norwich, Conn., 1884), I: 269-72.

<sup>12</sup> See George D. Harmon, “Douglas and the Compromise of 1850,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, XXI (Jan., 1929), 453-99; George Fort Milton, *Eve of Conflict: Stephen A. Douglas and the Needless War* (Boston and New York, 1934), 64-78; Frank H. Hodder, “The Authorship of the Compromise of 1850,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXII (March, 1936), 525-36; and especially Holman Hamilton, “Democratic Senate Leadership and the Compromise of 1850,” *ibid.*, XLI (Dec., 1954), 403-18.

As David Donald has shown in a witty article, present-day politicians seem to think they must prove that Lincoln is on their side, and they devote much ingenuity to "getting right with Lincoln."<sup>13</sup> A hundred years ago politicians thought they had to have the late great Whigs with them, and Lincoln for one spent a good deal of effort in getting right with Clay and Webster.

. . . .

After Lincoln's "rise to power" he still found occasions to recall the time when he had been an aspiring but obscure politician and Webster a man of influence and prestige. There seemed to be in Lincoln at least a trace of bitterness left over from the days when Webster along with Clay had helped to frustrate his fond hopes for a government job. Possibly he had his old disappointment in mind when as President, in a cabinet conversation, he agreed that Clay and Webster had been "hard and selfish leaders, whose private personal ambition had contributed to the ruin of their party."<sup>14</sup>

Lincoln, however, did not let these feelings affect his disposal of patronage. Generously he allowed Webster's son Fletcher to remain in the office of surveyor of the port of Boston as a holdover from the Buchanan administration. And when Fletcher organized a Massachusetts regiment "which," as Lincoln wrote to his Secretary of War, "Hon. Daniel Webster's old friends very much wish to get into the service," Lincoln gave his approval to its being mustered in. Colonel Webster took his regiment to war and was killed at the second battle of Bull Run.<sup>15</sup>

As he faced the duties of war leader, Lincoln must have been troubled by recollections of his years in Congress when

<sup>13</sup> David Donald, "Getting Right with Lincoln," *Harper's Magazine*, CCII (April, 1951), 74-80.

<sup>14</sup> John T. Morse, Jr., ed., *Diary of Gideon Welles* (3 vols., Boston and New York, 1911), I: 507 (entry for Jan. 8, 1864).

<sup>15</sup> *Collected Works*, IV: 336, 405. For Fletcher Webster's years in Illinois see Coleman McCampbell, "H. L. Kinney and Daniel Webster in Illinois in the 1830's," *Jour. Ill. State Hist. Soc.*, XLVII (Spring, 1954), 35-44.

he had joined Webster in criticizing the Mexican War. When in 1863 Lincoln exiled Clement L. Vallandigham, the Ohio Peace Democrat, Vallandigham's sympathizers reminded Lincoln of his own remarks in the days when he had been an anti-war Whig. Now Lincoln drew a distinction between wartime remarks made before mass meetings and those made inside the halls of Congress. He denied that he had ever opposed the Mexican War in popular discussions. In saying this he was less than candid, and probably satisfied his conscience no better than he satisfied the followers of Vallandigham. As Professor J. G. Randall has said, Lincoln would have resented it if President Polk had banished a man like Webster for criticizing the war with Mexico, whether in or out of Congress.<sup>16</sup>

But President Lincoln also had happier and less troublesome reminders of Webster—such as the anecdotes he told about him. One of these stories ran through Lincoln's mind on a bright May morning in 1862 as he watched a parade of Negro Sunday school children in the White House yard. "Did you ever hear the story of Daniel Webster and the schoolmaster?" he asked the men around him as he stepped back from the window. He proceeded to tell how Daniel, when a boy, had been repeatedly punished by his teacher for coming to school with dirty hands. One day the teacher asked to look at them. As Daniel went forward he surreptitiously licked one palm, wiped it on his pants, then exhibited it. "Daniel," said the teacher sternly, "if you will find another hand in this schoolroom as filthy as that, I will let you off this time." The quick-witted Daniel promptly held out his other hand. "That will do," sighed the teacher. "You may take your seat." Having concluded, Lincoln laughed as loud as any of his hearers.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> J. G. Randall, *Lincoln the President* (4 vols., New York, 1945-55), III: 266-67. Lincoln also drew the distinction that while the Whigs voted "that the war was unnecessarily and unconstitutionally begun by the President of the United States," they also voted "for all the supply measures which came up, and for all the measures in any way favorable to the officers, soldiers, and their families, who conducted the war through." *Collected Works*, IV: 66.

<sup>17</sup> Francis B. Carpenter, *The Inner Life of Abraham Lincoln: Six Months at the White House* (New York, 1867), 130-32; H. E. Chittenden, *Recollections of Presi-*

Lincoln told another Webster story to Francis B. Carpenter, the portrait painter, on a spring day in 1864 as he walked with him to Brady's photographic galleries to have his picture taken. Carpenter said something about "the penalty which attached to high positions in a democratic government—the tribute those filling them were compelled to pay the public." Lincoln then observed that there were different notions about what constituted a great man. And that reminded him of Webster's visit to Springfield twenty-seven years before. As Webster arrived in town and the welcoming band and procession moved down the street, a barefoot boy pulled at the sleeve of one of the citizens and asked what all the excitement was about. "Why, Jack," was the reply, "the biggest man in the world is coming." Now there happened to live in Springfield a gigantic fat man by the name of G. Jack ran up the street to see the visitor but soon came back with a disappointed air. "Well, did you see him?" the citizen inquired. "Ye-es," said Jack, "but laws—he ain't half as big as old G."<sup>18</sup>

To most of his contemporaries the sonorous Webster seemed one of the supreme orators of all history, the equal of Edmund Burke and even of Demosthenes. Few considered the rather thin-voiced Lincoln worthy of comparison with him. But Horace White of the *Chicago Tribune*, after hearing a speech of Lincoln's in 1854, thought it on the whole better than Webster's best. "It lacks something of the smooth, compulsive flow which takes the intellect captive in the Websterian diction," White commented, "but it excels in the simplicity, directness and lucidity which appeal both to the intellect and to the heart." And Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune*, who was in Lincoln's audience at Cooper Union in 1860, said he never had listened to a greater speech, though he had heard several of Webster's best.<sup>19</sup>

*dent Lincoln and His Administration* (New York, 1891), 330-34. The two accounts vary in details.

<sup>18</sup> Carpenter, *Inner Life*, 37.

<sup>19</sup> Horace White, *Lincoln in 1854* (Springfield, 1908), 9-11, 21-22.

It was embarrassing for Lincoln when the master of ceremonies, introducing him at the Astor House in New York during his journey to Washington as President-elect, mentioned that on other occasions Webster and Clay had spoken in the very room where Lincoln was now to speak. Since Lincoln was saving his policy announcements for the inaugural, he really had nothing to say at this time. "I did not understand when I was brought into this room that I was brought here to make a speech," he protested. "It was not intimated to me that I was brought into the room where Daniel Webster and Henry Clay had made speeches, and where one in my position might be expected to do something like those men."<sup>20</sup>

In Lincoln's opinion Webster was a remarkable orator, well worth reading and rereading. Lincoln once told Henry C. Whitney, his Urbana friend on the Eighth Judicial Circuit, that Webster "had no grace of oratory, but talked excellent sense and used good language." He added that he was especially impressed by a speech he himself had heard Webster make. In it, as Lincoln remembered, Webster had said: "Politicians are not sun-flowers, they do not . . . turn to their God when he sets, the same look which they turned when he rose." This quotation recurred to Lincoln after he became President and had to deal with office-seekers, and he put it into the draft of a talk he was to give in Baltimore in the spring of 1864, then in revising the speech took the passage out.<sup>21</sup>

But other and more important addresses by Lincoln owed a good deal to Webster. In preparing his House-Divided speech of 1858 he used the Reply to Hayne as a kind of model, and while working on his First Inaugural he again had before him that masterpiece of Webster's.

Lincoln—as Horace White observed—excelled Webster in simplicity, directness and lucidity. Compare the opening

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<sup>20</sup> Lincoln, *Collected Works*, IV: 230-31.

<sup>21</sup> Henry C. Whitney, *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln*, ed. by Paul M. Angle (Caldwell, Idaho, 1940), 497; *Collected Works*, VII: 303.

lines of the Reply to Hayne with Lincoln's much briefer paraphrase in the House-Divided speech. "When the mariner has been tossed for many days in thick weather, and on an unknown sea, he naturally avails himself of the first pause in the storm, the earliest glance of the sun, to take his latitude, and ascertain how far the elements have driven him from his true course. Let us imitate this prudence, and, before we float farther on the waves of this debate, refer to the point from which we departed, that we may at least be able to conjecture where we now are." That is Webster. And this is Lincoln: "If we could first know *where* we are, and *whither* we are tending, we could better judge *what* to do, and *how* to do it."<sup>22</sup>

On the significant issues of the Civil War, President Lincoln repeatedly spoke in Websterian echoes and acted in a Websterian spirit. On the question of slavery within the Southern states he agreed much more nearly with Webster than with the abolitionists or Radical Republicans. In his First Inaugural he took precisely the position on the matter that Webster had taken in the Seventh of March speech. Each state, said Lincoln, had a right "to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively," and the United States Constitution required "the reclaiming of what we call fugitive slaves." In a similar vein Webster in 1850 confessed he had no plan for disposing of slavery, but expected it to disappear in a century or so, and he was willing to support a program for colonizing freed Negroes outside the country. During the war Lincoln proposed a plan for freeing the slaves, which he originally preferred to either the Emancipation Proclamation or the Thirteenth Amendment. He expected the process to take many years and, like Webster, he favored the settling of freedmen in foreign lands.<sup>23</sup> Both made the cause of human freedom secondary to national unity.

<sup>22</sup> *Works of Daniel Webster* (6 vols., Boston, 1851), III: 270; Lincoln, *Collected Works*, II: 461.

<sup>23</sup> Webster, *Works*, V: 333, 354-55; Lincoln, *Collected Works*, IV: 251. On Lincoln and emancipation see Randall, *Lincoln the President*, II: 126-50.

On the questions of democracy and Union, Lincoln again and again quoted or adapted the words of Webster. The memorable phrase at Gettysburg—"of the people, by the people, for the people"—was a terse wording of what Webster, Theodore Parker and others had variously expressed. Webster in *McCulloch v. Maryland* and in the Reply to Hayne said: "It is, Sir, the people's Constitution, the people's government, made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people." The "last hopes of mankind," Webster declared in 1825, rested on the success of the Union, the American experiment in popular government. Unless that experiment succeeded and the Union was saved, Lincoln warned in 1862, we would lose "the last best, hope of earth." Physically the North and South could not separate, Webster maintained in 1850, and Lincoln did the same in 1861. To Webster the question of slavery in the territories was a "mere abstraction," and to Lincoln the question whether the seceded states had ever actually left the Union was after Appomattox a "merely pernicious abstraction."<sup>24</sup>

Today Lincoln and Webster deserve to be remembered together as heroes in the work of redeeming American democracy and nationality. In the words of the Lincoln biographer Albert J. Beveridge, "It was the noble passages from Webster, learned in school by Northern boys, that prepared them to respond, with arms in their hands, when Lincoln called them to support the National Government and to save the Union."<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Webster, *Works*, I: 77 (Bunker Hill address, June 17, 1825: "The last hopes of mankind, therefore, rest with us; and if it should be proclaimed, that our example had become an argument against the experiment, the knell of popular liberty would be sounded throughout the earth"); III: 321 (second reply to Hayne); V: 362 (Seventh of March speech, 1850: "We could not separate the States. . . . There are natural causes that would keep and tie us together"); Lincoln, *Collected Works*, IV: 259 (First Inaugural: "Physically speaking, we cannot separate"); V: 537 (Annual Message, Dec. 1, 1862: "We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best, hope of earth"); VIII: 403 (last public address, Apr. 11, 1865).

<sup>25</sup> Beveridge, *Lincoln*, II: 131.