

The Family Heritage Series

A weekly discussion of Americanist truths and traditions for those "heirs of all the ages" who will have to preserve that most important inheritance of all — freedom. Produced by the Movement To Restore Decency.



Volume II

Lesson Sixty-Seven

The Emancipation Proclamation

LESSON IDEA

To explain why the Emancipation Proclamation was issued and the effect it had; and to demonstrate that it was issued for political, not ideological, reasons.

PREPARATION

Have a map of the world on hand to locate Haiti and Liberia. Read "During The Week" and plan to adapt the project suggested to the particular needs of your family.

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“I HAVE NO PURPOSE, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists,” said Abraham Lincoln, Republican candidate for the United States Senate in 1858. “I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so.” It was a statement which he made often in the political debates with Stephen Douglas; it was an assurance which he gave the Southern people in his First Inaugural Address as President of the United States in 1861.

Yet, within eighteen months after assuming the highest office in the land, he issued a sweeping proclamation that not only *interfered* with slavery in the states where it existed, but seriously crippled the South militarily and economically. And it is clear this was the intended purpose. Does this turnabout mean Lincoln was a political charlatan? A devious politician who promises one thing as a candidate and does the opposite as an officeholder? No. But it *does* mean that the Emancipation Proclamation is one of the most misunderstood documents of all time.

In those tempestuous months between Lincoln's election and his issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, a political hurricane had swept the nation. Eleven states had seceded, forming the Confederate States of America; armies had been organized in both the North and the South; ships were built; coastal blockades were established; and battles were being fought. But the North had yet to win a decisive victory.

There was a strong possibility that the European nations, especially England (which depended on cotton imports from the Southern states), would recognize the Confederacy as a separate and independent nation, throwing the full support of her navy and her treasury into the fight — as France had done on behalf of the thirteen American colonies during the War for Independence. The American Minister to Spain, Carl Schurz, had already made a special trip to Washington to warn Lincoln about European interference. The only hope of thwarting it, he advised, was to free the slaves. Such an act would not only give the entire conflict the coloring of a moral crusade for human rights and win the support of European intellectuals, but it would also deprive the South of its labor force. It would mean leaving cotton to rot in the fields, thereby destroying the business partnership between Southern producers and European purchasers. It could also be argued that the same labor force that harvested cotton produced food, clothing, and weapons for the Confederate Army, and that freeing the slaves was a military tactic designed to weaken the war-making power of the seceding states. What do you think of this line of reasoning? [Encourage

