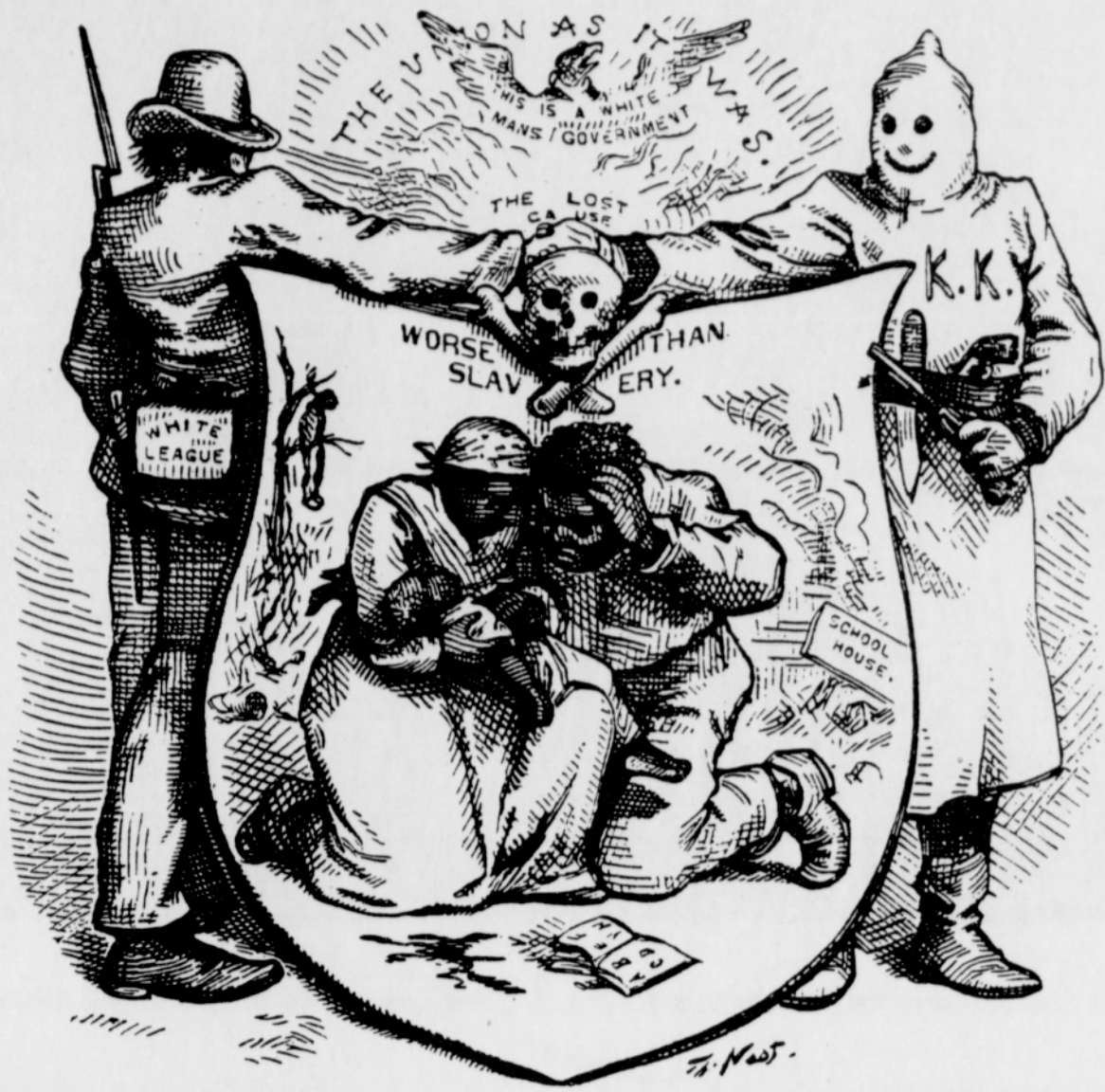


antagonism but also in a complex relationship that could not express itself without reference to each other. It was a class relationship that became ever more defined as a racial one. Southern society in particular was enclosed and closed off by its slave system. To quote C. Vann Woodward: "The ironic thing about these two great hyphenate minorities, Southern-Americans and Afro-Americans, confronting each other on their native soil for three and a half centuries, is the degree to which they have shaped each other's destiny, determined each other's isolation, shared and molded a common culture. It is in fact impossible to imagine the one without the other and quite futile to try."

Southern slave society grew from the same historical conditions that produced the world's other slave regimes. The rise of a world market and the need for cheap labor encouraged slavery, and only the advent of mechanical technology and industrialism rendered it inefficient and ultimately incapable of competing in the very market that created it. The South was haunted by its guilt and fear of slavery. Enslaving blacks was justified through claims that it was God's intent that whites were superior to blacks, that slavery civilized blacks and elevated them above their former status as jungle savages, and that in essence whites were carrying out God's law by making slaves and Christians out of pagan blacks. In reality, southern plantations were battlefields where slaves fought masters for physical and psychological survival, and although they were unlettered, outnumbered and unarmed, black slaves struggled in as many ways as they could find to preserve their humanity against almost inhuman odds. Southern whites bitterly resisted acknowledging the humanity of their black slaves. Underlying their pious justifications was a terror of the system they had created. The culture of the antebellum South was continually in dread of slave insurrection, and any outbreak was brutally suppressed. In a sense a reason for perpetuating slavery in the South was the fear of reprisal once it was abolished.

Most northern whites also considered themselves superior to blacks and the desire to abolish slavery had more to do with its interference with paid labor than with human rights. Even a majority of the northern abolitionists who had risked imprisonment and their lives providing underground systems of escape for runaway slaves felt as did Abraham Lincoln that blacks should dwell apart from whites.

Yet, ultimately, however intense the economic dialectics regarding slavery, and perhaps because the climate of industrialism allowed it, the most important reason for the abolition of slavery was the moral one. The idea of the inherent value of an individual outlasted slavery and was the chief source of its undoing. There were many reasons for the division of the young nation, South from North, but at its core was the inhumanity of slavery. Frank Tannenbaum, in his book "Slave & Citizen" wrote that inherent in the history of slavery was an important contribution to the theory of social change: Wherever the law accepted the doctrine of the moral personality of the slave and made possible the gradual achievement of freedom implicit in such a doctrine, the slave system was abolished peacefully. Where the slave was denied recognition as a moral person and was there-



THOMAS NAST

fore considered incapable of freedom, the abolition of slavery was accomplished by force, by violence and revolution.

We cannot separate our history from the long centuries of slavery. The fight for independence that characterized the American Revolution did not include independence for slaves, and the oversight caused the Civil War eighty years later. Emancipation only brought a semblance of physical relief from slavery but its underlying racialism has not been eradicated. If the class system of slavery is defined by color, then a post-slavery society becomes a form of apartheid, which has been the result in the United States since the Civil War, and which was starkly dramatized in the violence unleashed against the civil rights movement in the 1950s and '60s. We remain a divided nation, and as Lincoln said, though he was not the first to say it, a house divided will not long stand. Blacks as well as whites wish for separation, but there is really no other place to go. Just as whites are no longer European, American blacks are not Africans anymore. For better or worse, blacks and whites are hybrid-Americans. It is long past time to put an end to the tragic dichotomy between racial supremacy, in particular white over black, and the necessity for justice, freedom and equality for all Americans that is indispensable to Constitutional government. As Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "The word 'wait' has almost always meant never."

Lincoln's executive order of Emancipation went into effect on January 1, 1863, and this year celebrates its 130th anniversary. Though it abolished slavery in the Confederate states (though not those under Union control), it was probably not legal according to U.S. civil law. To remedy any deficiencies in the proclamation in regard to its legal standing, the 13th amendment to the Constitution was introduced in Congress in 1864 and was ratified in 1865, the year the Civil War ended. It abolished slavery or involuntary servitude in the United States or anywhere under U.S. jurisdiction. The Emancipation Proclamation, though it raised the conflict for union to an issue of international moral principle, had little initial practical impact because Lincoln at the time had no authority in the Confederacy.

Lincoln had proposed the proclamation the previous summer. Secretary of State Seward suggested he wait to announce it until a significant Union victory so that European governments would not misinterpret it as a final "shriek in our retreat."

Lincoln had said at the start of the Civil War, "If I could preserve the Union by freeing all of

the slaves everywhere, I would do so. If I could preserve the Union by freeing none of the slaves, I would do so. If I could preserve the Union by freeing some of the slaves, I would do so." His critics and some supporters thought the proclamation was a cynical act by a weak, vacillating President. Yet by conceding to "free the few" he struck to the heart of the conflict and never afterward wavered from his promise.

He got his victory at Sharpsburg, Maryland on September 16, 1862, near a little creek that was named Antietam. The Union army routed a Confederate invasion of the North. It was the single bloodiest day of the Civil War: at least 15,000 dead on both sides and another 20,000 wounded or missing. (Union losses alone were twice as many as those of the Normandy D-Day landings 82 years later.) Five days after Antietam Lincoln issued his proclamation:

"On the first day of January (1863)... 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 then be, thenceforth, and forever free."

"If my name ever goes into history," Lincoln said, "it was for this act."

"We cannot escape history," Lincoln had said to Congress. "We... will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance or insignificance can spare one or another of us. The fiery trail through which we pass will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation."



Cannon Beach, Oregon



Uriah's St. Diablo Jellies



Parnassus Books
234 Tenth Street
Astoria, Oregon
325-1363

