In Collected Works Copy of Lincoln autograph letter.

Springfield, Oct.18, 1858.

Hon. J. N. Brown,

My dear Sir,

I do not perceive how I can express myself more plainly that I have done in the foregoing extracts. In four of them I have expressly disclaimed all intention to bring about social and political equality between the white and black races, and in all the rest I have done the same thing by clear implication. I have made it equally plain that I think the negro is included in the word "men" used in the Declaration of Independence. I believe the declaration that "all men are created equal" is the great fundamental principle upon which our free institutions rest; that negro slavery is violative of that principle; but that, by our form of government, that principle has not been made one of legal obligation; that by our form of government, the states which have slavery are to retain it, or surrender it at their own pleasure; and that all others- individuals, free states and national government- are constitutionally bound to leave them alone about it I believe our government was thus formed (framed?) because of the necessity springing from the actual presence of slavery, when it was formed. (framed?) That such necessity does not exist in the territories where slavery is not present. In his Mendenhall speech Mr. Clay says,"Now, as an abstract principle, there is no doubt of the truth of that declaration (all men created equal) and it is desirable, in the original construction of society, and in organized societies, to keep it in view, as a great fundamental principle." Again, in the same speech, Mr. Clay says, "If a state of nature existed, and we were about to lay the foundations of society, no man would be more strongly opposed than I should to incorporate theinstitution of slavery among its elements." Exactly

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so. In our new free territories, a state of nature does exist. In them Congress lays the foundations of society; and, in laying these foundations, I say, with Mr. Clay, it is desirable that the declaration of the equality of all men shall be kept in view, as a great fundamental principle; and that Congress, which lays the foundations of society, should, like Mr. Clay, be strongly opposed to the incorporation of slavery among its elements. But it does not follow that social and political equality, between the whites and blacks, must be incorporated, because slavery must not. The declaration does not so require.

Yours as ever

A. Lincoln.

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