“Let reverence for the laws be breathed by every American mother to the lisping babe that prattles on her lap—let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, in colleges—let it be written in primers, spelling books, and in almanacs—let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the political religion of the nation.”

-Lincoln, Lyceum Speech, 1838

“Plainly the central idea of secession is the essence of anarchy. A majority held in restraint by constitutional checks and limitations, and always changing easily with deliberate changes of popular opinions and sentiments, is the only true sovereign of a free people. Whoever rejects it does of necessity fly to anarchy or to despotism.”

-Lincoln, First Inaugural, March 4, 1861

“The whole of the laws which were required to be faithfully executed were being resisted and failing of execution in nearly one-third of the States. Must they be allowed to finally fail of execution, ... are all the laws but one to go unexecuted and the Government itself go to pieces lest that one be violated?”

-Lincoln, Message to Congress, July 4, 1861

“On the side of the Union, it is a struggle for maintaining in the world that form and substance of government whose leading object is to elevate the condition of men – to lift artificial weights from all shoulders—to clear the paths of laudable pursuit for all—to afford all an unfettered start and a fair chance in the race of life.”

-Lincoln, Message to Congress, July 4, 1861
“I have no purpose directly or indirectly to interfere with slavery in the states where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so....One section of our country believes slavery is right and ought to be extended, while the other believes it is wrong and ought not to be extended. This is the only substantial dispute. The fugitive slave clause of the Constitution and the law for the suppression of the foreign slave trade are each as well enforced, perhaps, as any law can ever be in a community where the moral sense of the people imperfectly supports the law itself.”

-Lincoln, First Inaugural, 1861

“Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, . . . I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.”

-Lincoln, Emancipation Proclamation, 1863

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“The expression of that principle ['liberty for all'], in our Declaration of Independence, was most happy, and fortunate ['liberty for all']. The assertion of that principle, at that time, was the word, 'fitly spoken' which has proved an 'apple of gold' to us. The Union, and the Constitution, are the picture of silver, subsequently framed around it. The picture was made, not to conceal, or destroy the apple; but to adorn, and preserve it. The picture was made for the apple—not the apple for the picture. So let us act, that neither picture, or apple, shall ever be blurred, or bruised or broken.”

-Lincoln, Fragment on the Constitution, c. December 1860