CHAPTER XX

THE JEFFERSONIAN JACKSONIAN LINCOLN


The campaign of 1860 had been one really between warring Jeffersonian sects. The Democrats of both factions were technically the legal heirs of Jefferson and Jackson, but on the great question of slavery the Republicans were Jefferson's spiritual successors and were justly entitled to take for their party the old name Jefferson had chosen for his followers.

The Democrats held to Jefferson's 'theory of strict construction of the Constitution and sovereign rights of states, but Jefferson had favored those theories as means to an end—a free government of, by and for the people—which he believed would be best secured by leaving all power practicable in the state governments. Jefferson's wish was a government which would bring to realization the great fundamental principles he announced in the Declaration of Independence and in other writings; states rights and state sovereignty were agencies to that end. Jefferson opposed the extension of slavery and drew the Northwest Ordinance, with the clause prohibiting slavery in the territory ceded by Virginia, as a condition of the grant. Both wings of the Democratic Party in 1860 were opposed to Jefferson's attitude on the extension of slavery. The compact theory of the federal government, the states rights theory, was not sacrosanct with Jefferson, but the principles of liberty, justice and self-government were, and the exclusion of slavery from territory where it did not already exist was close to his heart.

The Republican Party in addition to taking Jefferson's party name included his great truths in its platform, and the cardinal principle of the party in the 1860 campaign was based on his Ordinance of 1784. Its candidate was the straightest Jeffersonian ever occupying the Presidential office, Madison excepted. Abraham Lincoln in his Douglas debates and other speeches had constantly appealed to Jefferson, to Jefferson's Ordinance and his Declaration of Independence. Jefferson was constantly quoted or cited, and Madison, the man who had demanded that the word "slave" should not be used in the Constitution.

A further Democratic character was given the Republican Party of 1860 by the large number and great influence of the Free Soil Democrats who were members of it. These Democrats in Massachusetts and other Eastern states, who had generally combined with the Republicans and the Common Whigs against the Cotton Whigs, or Woolly-head Whigs as they were called, before 1860, and Western leaders like Blair and Chase, in great numbers became outright Republicans so long as Lincoln lived.

Still another Democratic influence was evinced by Lincoln. As he used Jefferson to support his position on slavery extension, so he cited Jackson's attitude toward the Supreme Court decision on the bank charter to justify his own position toward the Dred Scott decision, and Jackson's stand on the indissolubility of the Union and the power and duty of the President to enforce federal laws in seceding states as establishing those principles. He wrote Nicolay in 1860 after his election—"The right of a state to secede is not an open or debatable question. It was fully discussed in Jackson's time and denied not only by him, but by the vote of Congress." A comparison of Lincoln's first annual message with Jackson's Nullification message and proclamation is interesting to Democrats. Lincoln pleaded the line Jackson laid down.

In view of the Republican Party's subsequent adoption of Alexander Hamilton as its ancestor and prophet, it is curious to note that Lincoln in all his speeches and writings mentions Hamilton only twice and each time merely casually. In a speech in Congress on the veto power he recites the fact that Washington consulted Jefferson and Hamilton touching the question, gives the position of each and then, paying no more attention to Hamilton, proceeds to quote at length Jefferson's reason for his opinion. The other reference is equally slight, only naming Hamilton along with some other members of the Constitutional convention as opposed to slavery.

Well might Woodrow Wilson say, in 1912, that Lincoln, being