





Gen. Robert E. Lee

LIVING CONFEDERATE  
PRINCIPLES  
A Heritage For All Time

by Lloyd Tilghman Everett  
Washington Camp, No. 305  
Sons of Confederate Veterans

with  
Appendices

THE CONFEDERATE  
REPRINT COMPANY



[WWW.CONFEDERATEREPRINT.COM](http://WWW.CONFEDERATEREPRINT.COM)

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Originally Published in 1917  
by Yexid Publishing Company  
Ballston, Virginia

Reprint Edition © 2016  
The Confederate Reprint Company  
Post Office Box 2027  
Toccoa, Georgia 30577  
[www.confederatereprint.com](http://www.confederatereprint.com)

Cover and Interior Design by  
Magnolia Graphic Design  
[www.magnoliagraphicdesign.com](http://www.magnoliagraphicdesign.com)

ISBN-13: 978-1945848032  
ISBN-10: 1945848030

# CHAPTER ONE



We often hear it said that the glory of the Confederate soldier is imperishable and immortal; that his valor and devotion to duty have won for him a name and a fame that shall never die.

That is true. History shows us no equal to the splendid blend of physical and moral courage and long sustained fortitude of the half starved legions of Lee – certainly no superior. And while, to use a homely phrase, every tub must stand upon its own bottom – while each man must win for himself, by his own worth, his standing in the community – yet I prize as a priceless treasure the proud fact that I am the son of a Confederate soldier. Nor is this merely a matter of pride or of accidental honor to me. It is a very real incentive to look well to my own course and conduct in order that I may hand on untarnished, the shining legacy that was bequeathed to me.

“Duty is the sublimest word in the English language,” is a maxim that has been widely credited to our peerless Lee, although incorrectly so according to respectable authority.<sup>1</sup> But, in any event, the sentiment is well worthy of General Lee, whose own life, public and private, was a superb illustration of the truth of the sublime epigram. And so, unswerving and unfaltering devotion to duty is the glorious heritage which we Sons of Confederate Veterans, *as* sons of Confederate veterans, have acquired by reason of our lineage.

But it is not of the courage, valor and endurance of the Confederate soldier that I wish particularly to speak on this occasion. Those cardinal virtues of Dixie’s defenders have been extolled a thousand times over by tongues more fluent than mine. Nor is it my purpose to vindicate the course of the peoples of the Southern States in asserting, and striving at all costs to maintain

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1. The purported letter of Gen. Lee containing the expression is found in Dr. J. Wm. Jones’ *Personal Reminiscences, Anecdotes and Letters of Gen. Robt. E. Lee*, 1875, p. 133. Capt. James Power Smith, of the Southern Historical Society, advises me that Professor Graves, of the University of Virginia, has examined the question in an Address before the Bar Association of Virginia, and reached the conclusion that the letter was not written by General Lee; also, that the Publishing Committee of the Society concurs in this conclusion. – L. T. E.

their independence under the exigencies of the particular crisis of 1860-61. The world is already coming to know, as we have always known, that we need no such vindication – that our open record is its own vindication.

No, it is another phase of what we may call the Confederate subject which I wish here to discuss – a phase which, it seems to me, has been too little featured and, I fear, too little recognized, even by our own chroniclers and advocates. And yet, to my mind, upon the general recognition of it depends the true progress of our own people; nay, of free government, and hence of civilization itself. And that phase or aspect of the general subject is this: *The absolute soundness of the principles upon which the Southern Confederacy was bottomed*; not merely the rightfulness of our stand for political independence under the peculiar circumstances of that time, but the everlasting verity of the political and institutional ideals underlying our action – ideals vital and essential to all ages and climes as a goal toward which to press, if the world is to have true *liberty with progress*.

For our Confederate war – our second war for independence, as Stonewall Jackson called it<sup>2</sup>

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2. Gen. Jackson's farewell address to the "Stonewall Brigade," Oct. 4, 1861: John Esten Cooke's *Stonewall Jackson: A Military Biography*, 1876, p. 856.

– was not a mere abortive revolution. We of the Southern States stood for great and fundamental principles of government; principles that meant, *and that still mean* much for the advancement of free institutions and of human happiness.

And, just as the valor of the Confederate soldier and the untold heroism of the Confederate woman are immortal, so, with this larger view of the subject in mind, I take a theme for consideration here, and name it:

Living Confederate Principles:  
A Heritage for all Time.



## CHAPTER TWO



The present is a time of peace and good will, of broad and tolerant sentiment, of generous breadth of view; in a word, it is an era of good feeling between the various sections of these United States.

Just now there is rolling past us the semi-centenary of the War for Southern Independence – the “Civil War” – the War between the States or the sections – the “War of the Rebellion” (whether by the North or the South, we need not here inquire) – call it what one will; everyone knows to what we here refer; that mighty clash of arms which to many of us is still most commonly referred to as, simply, The War. On every hand, to judge from the newspapers, are daily evidences of amity and cordiality between the Grey and the Blue; of honor accorded brave men by brave men. And in July, 1913, at Gettysburg,

there was formally and finally buried – let us see, was it the twenty-seventh time, or the hundred and twenty-seventh time, since the war with Spain? – “the last vestige of sectionalism.” And when I see and hear all this, I am glad. For then I may claim the right to a respectful hearing on my chosen theme, even though certain views I hold regarding The War, its causes, its conduct and its consequences, may differ widely from those prevalent in the North, and even from those sometimes found in the South.

Nor is this era of good feeling confined to America. Just now a son of Virginia and of a Confederate veteran sits in the White House, and a grandson of Virginia is the premier of the cabinet. From these two men of Southern stock now at the helm of the ship of state, has gone forth to all the world the message from this mighty nation, Peace on earth, good will to men; not good will to men on earth from God in Heaven, as on that Christmas morn nineteen centuries ago, but peace on earth from men to men – in truth, a clarion call from a strong nation to the other nations of the earth, strong and weak alike; a call to these other nations to recognize as never before the brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God, as it is sometimes expressed. Under the Bryan Peace plan, if adopted, a long step forward will have been taken toward that happy

era when “they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”<sup>1</sup>

This means a turning from the forum of force to the rule of reason; a substitution of calm argument or impartial arbitration for the dread arbitrament of war. Yea, veterans and descendants of the Grey, it means a turning from the principles and practices of Lincoln and the North; it means the coming triumph of the underlying principles of the Confederate States of America.

I know that it is often said that the Southern States appealed to the sword in their controversy with the Northern States. I am here to challenge that allegation; to absolutely deny its truth. And I can prove my contention from the record, and prove it to the verge of demonstration. That record shows that the South did not choose the arbitrament of the sword; it does show that *she resorted to secession as the last hope of PEACE WITH HONOR.*

Ours is pre-eminently a race of peace and progress through the channels of self-government. The history of our ancestors for a thousand years and more will sustain the truth of this claim. True, it is a history of internecine war, of-

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1. The Bible, Isaiah ii, 4.

ten, but largely so because it is the life story of men, and of many generations of men, who prized peace and order so highly that they were ever ready, if need be, to fight for it. Magna Charta, the Bill of Rights, the Petition of Right, the Revolution of 1688, the Act of Settlement – these are some of the monuments that mark the achievements of this orderly yet militant race. And these men laid the corner-stone of their structure in local self-government, as the truest safeguard for an oppressed minority, and thus the surest bulwark for political liberty itself. Yes, local self-government, or home rule, is of the very warp and woof of our institutions.

These salutary political principles, these racial characteristics, were transplanted also to the kindly soil of the New World when a greater Britain was planted here.

It was in support of these principles that our Revolutionary sires protested against the unconstitutional stamp acts and similar taxation measures of England oppressive of the American minority, in the efforts of the mother country to recuperate for the expenses of the French and Indian war. At first, they sought a peaceable remedy in the form of remonstrances, resolutions and the like. When they found that these availed them not, they then reluctantly accepted the gauge of battle flung in their faces by their haughty oppressors across the

seas. Even after actual war was raging, these American patriots of British stock still indulged the fatuous dream of an unbroken British union, and sought to wage their fight under the British crown and, as nearly as possible, under the British flag.<sup>2</sup> As himself afterward declared, George Washington, when he took command of the rebel forces under authority from the Continental Congress, “*abhorred the idea of independence.*”<sup>3</sup>

But the logic of events soon brought forth the instrument officially entitled “The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.”<sup>4</sup> (And, by the way, Declaration is written with a big *D*, united States with a little *u* and a capital *S*.) This immortal declaration laid down the fundamental doctrine that:

“Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the

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2. “It is related that the flag which was raised at Cambridge, January 2, 1776, by Washington, was composed of thirteen red and white stripes, with the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew emblazoned on the blue canton in place of the stars.” – Brown & Strauss’ *Dictionary of American Politics*, article “Flag of the United States.”

3. A.H. Stephens’ *History of the United States*, p. 225.

4. Revised Statutes of the United States, 1878, copy of the Declaration of Independence, certified by Ferdinand Jefferson, official custodian, or “Keeper of the Rolls at the Department of State.”

governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.”

This, our first war for independence, was successful. About the close of it these thirteen independent republics formed a closer union among themselves, under what was known as the Articles of Confederation. This becoming unsatisfactory after a very few years, most of the constituent States seceded (which at the time was denounced by a few as unconstitutional and a breach of faith<sup>5</sup>), and these seceding States, eleven in number, formed a new union under the Federal Constitution that was framed in 1787 and went into operation between these eleven States March 4, 1789. Afterward the two remaining States of

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5. See, for instance, action of the convention of North Carolina which refused to accede to the Federal Constitution of 1787, adopting by a large majority a resolution recommending to the Legislature to pass similar impost laws to those to be passed by the Congress under the Constitution “and appropriate the money arising therefrom to the use of Congress”; i.e., thus refusing to recognize the secession of the ratifying States from the old Confederation. Elliot’s *Debates*, Vol. IV., p. 251.

the old union, North Carolina and Rhode Island, also acceded to the new instrument.

As is well known, this new Union was regarded with great jealousy, and scrutinized very closely by a number of the Continental fathers, the immortal Patrick Henry, the firebrand of the Revolution, and George Mason, author of the great Bill of Rights of Virginia, among the number. As just seen, political independence from the despotic central power of Britain had been gained by the assertion and maintenance of the right to change oppressive governments. But this struggle was won by force of arms and at the cost of much bloodshed; and the principle of the right to alter oppressive governments thus asserted in the Declaration of Independence might be construed, it was feared, to mean merely the right of revolution, and so the people of some of the United States, if thereafter oppressed by the central Government to be created under the new Constitution, might be left the right of separation, in self-defense, only by force of arms. And thus we would have progressed no whither in our supposed upward and onward march in the path of just and orderly self-government. Wherefore, several of the States – Virginia, New York and Rhode Island – in acceding to the new Constitution, expressly reserved the right to peaceably withdraw or secede, should they thereafter

find it necessary to their happiness to do so.<sup>6</sup>

This was an important advance in self-government, and a further safeguard for the minority. The protection of the minority, be it remembered, was a primary object in the framing of the Federal Constitution, as stated at the time by James Madison, who is called the Father of the Constitution. In the Virginian convention that ratified the Constitution of the United States, delegate James Madison declared:

“But, on a candid examination of history, we shall find that turbulence, violence and abuse of power by the majority trampling on the rights of the minority, have produced factions and commotions which, in republics, have more frequently than any other cause produced despotism. . . . If we consider the peculiar situation of the United States, and what are the sources of that diversity of sentiment which pervades its [sic] inhabitants, we shall find great danger to fear that the same causes may terminate here in the same fatal effects which they produced in those republics. This danger ought to be wisely guarded against.”<sup>7</sup>

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6. See Elliot's *Debates*, Vol. I., pp. 327, 327-9, 334-5; Stephens' *History of the United States*, pp. 339-40, 347-50, 358-61.

7. Elliot's *Debates*, Vol. III., p. 87.



Madison advocated the adoption of the Constitution as affording the needed protection to the minority.

Remember that: the Constitution of the United States was framed and adopted, the Union of the States thereunder was formed, for the *peaceable* protection of the *minority* against the oppressions of the majority. And mark this: it was proposed by some to embody in the Constitution a power to coerce States that might refuse to obey the laws of Congress. Madison (still the father of the Constitution) said that this would mean war; and the proposal was voted down.<sup>8</sup>

Well, time went on. Sectional differences and jealousies speedily developed between the Southern and the Northern States. Under Jefferson, a Southern President, the great trans-Mississippi territory of Louisiana was bought from Napoleon, in 1803; and thereby the area of the United States was approximately doubled. New England thought that this would strengthen the South at the expense of the North. Accordingly, New England threatened secession.<sup>9</sup>

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8. *Ib.*, Vol. V., pp. 127-8, 140.

9. McMaster's *Hist. People of the United States*, Vol. III., p. 42; 2 Hy. Adams' *History of the United States*, 160 et seq.; Powell's *Nullification and Secession in the United States*, chap. 3.

New England was at this time a commercial or sea-faring country, and had as yet few manufactures. The Embargo law of Jefferson's second administration was unpopular in this sea-trading New England, and again loud mutterings of secessionist purposes were heard up there.<sup>10</sup> The State of Louisiana was admitted in 1812, despite the celebrated threat of Josiah Quincy, of Massachusetts, on the floor of Congress in 1811, that such admission of a new Southern State from a part of the Louisiana purchase would constitute adequate cause for secession by some of the Northern States, "amicably if they can, violently if they must."<sup>11</sup>

But conditions soon changed. The war of 1812 cut us off from Europe, whence we had theretofore obtained most of our manufactured goods; and New England, her sea-trade interrupted by the war, with commendable energy and enterprise now began to manufacture. During this war the famous Hartford Convention, of New England, met, with a large sized list toward secession.<sup>12</sup> After the war New England and the

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10. McMaster, Vol. III., chap. 19; 4 Hy. Adams, p. 407, 431.

11. *Congressional Speeches of Josiah Quincy*, edited by his son, Edmund Quincy (1874), p. 196.

12. See a host of authorities, including Stephens' *History of the United States*, p. 419.

North generally began to find the Union a good thing for them; it furnished a free market – the Southern States – for buying the manufacturers’ raw materials; it furnished a “protected” market – still largely the Southern States – for selling the manufactured goods.

But New England and the rest of the North were still painfully jealous of new Southern and Western or Southwestern States. They opposed the admission of Missouri, 1819, and now first raised seriously the question of Negro slavery as a sectional issue. Thomas Jefferson was himself, like many other Southerners, in favor of the abolition of slavery – a peaceable abolition. But he could see further into the future than could most men. So now, when this Missouri-slavery issue was raised by New England and the North, for the purpose of keeping the new lands of the West for themselves as against the South, the aged Jefferson wrote that it roused him as a fire-bell in the night, and portended a disastrous sectional struggle.<sup>13</sup>

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13. Jefferson to Holmes, April 22, 1820, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (1829), Vol. IV., pp. 323-4; also, in *Jefferson’s Complete Works*, Vol. VI., p. 159, as cited in Stephens’ *History of the United States*, p. 431.