

The War of Ignorance against Robert E. Lee

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Robert E. Lee, Confederate General in March 1864

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**The Slander of a Gallant Soldier, Noble Patriot, and True Christian With Rejoinder by
President Dwight D. Eisenhower**
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On June 11, General Jack Keane, U.S. Army (ret.) appeared on at least two evening Fox News shows. Although he agreed with President Trump's position not to rename Army bases named for Confederate generals, for some reason, he went out of his way to condemn Confederates, including Robert E. Lee as traitors. I saw it on Shannon Bream's show. This was in the midst of wave after wave of wanton mob destruction of not only Confederate monuments but American monuments generally. Having had a high opinion of Keane as a military analyst, I was shocked that he apparently knew so little about what the Southern cause really was—independence for a number of strong economic, taxation, constitutional, and general fairness reasons—and that he would specifically slander Robert E. Lee as a traitor.

Keane apparently knows nothing about the issue of secession—that followed the pattern and reasoning of the 1776 Declaration of Independence. It was taught as legal in West Point text books—such as William Rawle's *A View of the Constitution of the United States of America*, and others. In ratifying the Constitution, New York, Rhode Island, and Virginia made a specific point to reserve their right of secession, and the other states agreed to it. Even Lincoln supported the right of secession in an 1848 statement. Several New England states threatened secession five times because they felt their power was threatened by the Louisiana Purchase (1802), the Embargo Act (1807), the admission of Louisiana (1812), The War of 1812 (1814), and the annexation of Texas (1845), leading to the Mexican War.

Keane's statements were not only appallingly ignorant but closely resembled the talking points in recent left-leaning online articles attacking Lee and the Confederacy. He was later joined in making such ignorant and outrageous remarks by former Army generals attacking President Trump. As a decorated combat veteran of the Vietnam War, I felt personally insulted, especially since Southerners have long and proudly been disproportionately represented in the Armed Services. My brother, Randy, was also a Vietnam veteran. My father was a U.S. Navy veteran, and yes, my great grandfather and his three brothers, who were yeomen farmers, served in Confederate cavalry and infantry regiments.

As to those who can somehow believe Lincoln in April 1861 called for 75,000 volunteers to free Southern slaves, I could give numerous irrefutable rebuttals, but all that is in my 2011 book: *The Un-civil War: Shattering the Historical Myths*,

But in the defense of Robert E. Lee, I prefer to let former General of the Army, hero of the D-Day Normandy invasion, and President of the United States (1953-1961), Dwight Eisenhower, make my primary arguments. During Eisenhower's eight years in office, he kept a picture of Robert E. Lee on his wall in the White House the whole time. On August 1, 1960, a New York dentist, Dr. Leon W. Scott, wrote an angry letter to Eisenhower excoriating him for having that picture of Lee in his White House office. Here was Eisenhower's answer written on August 9:

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Dear Dr. Scott: Scruggs' Column

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By Mike Scruggs
Respecting your August 1 inquiry calling attention to my often expressed admiration for General Robert E. Lee, I would say, first, that we need to understand that at the time of the War Between the States the issue of secession had remained unresolved for more than 70 years. Men of probity, character, public standing and unquestioned loyalty, both North and South, had disagreed over this issue as a matter of principle from the day our Constitution was adopted.

General Robert E. Lee was, in my estimation, one of the supremely gifted men produced by our Nation. He believed unswervingly in the Constitutional validity of his cause which until 1865 was still an arguable question in America; he was a poised and inspiring leader, true to the high trust reposed in him by millions of his fellow citizens; he was thoughtful yet demanding of his officers and men, forbearing with captured enemies but ingenious, unrelenting and personally courageous in battle, and never disheartened by a reverse or obstacle. Through all his many trials, he remained selfless almost to a fault and unflinching in his faith in God. Taken altogether, he was noble as a leader and as a man, and unsullied as I read the pages of our history.

From deep conviction, I simply say this: a nation of men of Lee's caliber would be unconquerable in spirit and soul. Indeed, to the degree that present-day American youth will strive to emulate his rare qualities, including his devotion to this land as revealed in his painstaking efforts to help heal the Nation's wounds once the bitter struggle was over, will be strengthened and our love of freedom sustained.

Such are the reasons that I proudly display the picture of this great American on my office wall.

Sincerely,

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Indeed, Lee is one of the most respected and revered military leaders in American history. That respect and reverence extends over most of the world, wherever military leadership is studied. There is no doubt that Lee's reputation has suffered from the slanders of modern political agendas, but these are based on questionable political expediency, false historical narratives, and increasing ignorance of history.

Lee did not favor slavery before, during, or after the "Civil War" that took the lives of over 850,000 military personnel and civilians from 1861 to 1865. He believed the institution of slavery was a corrupting scourge to both slaves and slave owners. He freed the slaves he inherited from the estate of his wife's father, George Washington Custis, probated in 1858. This was not fully completed until late December 1862 to make sure the legacies of the will could be accomplished as

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each emancipated family had sufficient circumstances, training, and experience to earn a living on their own. But facts and sound reason do not count for much in today's hysterical and cowardly media environment.
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There is no doubt that African Americans have suffered much and gained much in the course of their American history. But they should not allow themselves to be exploited by ambitious and devious scoundrels, who care only for their votes and little for truth and their prosperity and general advancement. Political correctness has created a coercive and unjust civil rights environment comparable to the Reconstruction era of 1865 to 1877 and the Salem Witch Trials of 1692. In the last decade, Neo-Marxist agitators and cowardly politicians have managed to magnify not only real tragedies affecting African Americans but even fake ones into an unjust excuse for the cultural genocide of anything Southern. Thus all Americans are suffering from a hate and vengeance driven agenda that only the stupidest politicians can believe will result in racial understanding and healing. Besides cultural destruction and increased tension, it will only result in more bad government.

America's crisis does not demand more vote-buying schemes and ignorant demagoguery. It does not demand sacrificing our freedom, our culture, and true history to coercive government, anti-Christian multiculturalism, and cowardly political correctness. What we need are leaders with courage, character, common sense, and wisdom. That is why we need to remember Robert E. Lee and many others like him as examples to ourselves and our posterity.

Following Lee's death at his home in Lexington, Virginia, on October 12, 1870, former Confederate President Jefferson Davis gave a eulogy of Robert E. Lee at a Memorial meeting in Richmond on November 3. This was probably the largest gathering of Confederate generals and officers since the end of the war. In the course of his speech, he gave this praise of Lee:

“This good citizen, this gallant soldier, this great general, this true patriot, had yet a higher praise than this or these; he was a true Christian.”

Lee himself might have counseled us by the words of 2 Timothy 2:3, quoted by Jefferson Davis at Lee's funeral:

“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

John Brown Gordon, Confederate Lieutenant General and later Governor of Georgia and U.S. Senator had this to say about Lee:

“Intellectually, he was cast in a giant mold. Naturally he was possessed of strong passions. He loved the excitement of war. He loved grandeur. But all these appetites and powers were brought under the control of his judgment and made subservient to his Christian faith. This made him habitually unselfish and ever willing to sacrifice on the altar of duty and in the service of his fellows...He is an epistle, written of God and designed by God to teach the people of this country that earthly success is not the criterion of merit, not the measure of

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the greatness of
true glory! Mike Scruggs' Column

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We would do well to remember his elevated sense of duty and honor. Writing to one of his sons, he advised:

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“Duty...is the sublimest word in our language. Do your duty in all things....You cannot do more—you should never wish to do less.”

When told that his chaplains were praying for him daily, he responded:

“I can only say that I am nothing but a poor sinner, trusting in Christ alone for salvation.”

Responding to public praise, Lee said;

“I tremble for my country when I hear of confidence expressed in me. I know too well my weakness, that our only hope is in God.”

What modern American military leader would give this charge to their troops?

In General Order Number 83, April 13, 1863, he wrote:

“Soldiers! We have sinned against Almighty God. We have forgotten His signal mercies, and have cultivated a revengeful, haughty, and boastful spirit. We have not remembered that the defenders of a just cause should be pure in His eyes; that our times are in His hands; and we have relied too much on our own arms for the achievement of our independence. God is our only refuge and strength. Let us humble ourselves before Him...”

To a friend who condemned the North at the end of the war, Lee said,

“I have fought against the people of the North because I believed they were seeking to wrest from the South dearest rights. But I have never cherished toward them bitter or vindictive feelings, and I have never seen the day when I did not pray for them.”

Finally, our own honor demands that we respect and revere the memory of our fallen heroes, including those who served beneath the Southern Cross. These words from South Carolina Confederate veteran, journalist, and poet Henry Timrod (1829-1867) in his *Ode at Magnolia Cemetery* should move our hearts to resolve:

“Stoop, angels, thither from the skies! There is no holier ground

Than where defeated valor lies, by mourning beauty crowned.”