

REMARKS

given by

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on the occasion of the celebration of the birth of

Robert Edward Lee

by the

United Daughters of the Confederacy

Great men are the ambassadors of Providence sent to reveal to their fellow men their unknown selves ... A wholesome regard for the memory of the great men of long ago is the best assurance to a people of a continuation of great men to come, who shall be able to instruct, to lead, and to inspire.

- Calvin Coolidge

A great nation - a great democracy - needs heroes to set us an example - a paradigm for conduct, a coalescence of our own definition. Currently we live in an anti-heroic age. Egalitarianism presides.

The great American Revolution was about Liberty - not egalitarianism. That was part and parcel to the French and Soviet Revolutions. We sought Liberty as God given - Liberty *under* God; the French and the Soviets sought freedom *from* God.

Their legacy is that of a hecatomb of death and violence. To be subordinate to God suggests inequality. Despots have always understood this. Despots have always sought to banish God from the social equation.

If there is no personal God, then we can all be ideologically equivalent and if we are all the same than the concept of the heroic ... or the inexplicable appearance of great men and women in history is an inconsistent chink in the armour of the Brave New World - the hydra head of collectivism.

It would be an admittance that some men are simply unlike others; that some men are different. Yet both Scripture and common sense tells us that we are each distinct, different, and unique.

Yet many of our current national elites remain obsessed and possessed with an egalitarian

temperament ... and that combined with the reductionist methodology of their social sciences seek to reduce the course of human affairs to material and sub-rational forces.

Fundamentally this is Marxist egalitarian leveling - it is also adverse to our shared Judeo-Christian traditions and ethics based on a personal God who has given us each free will.

While they believe in the myth of the common man, we understand that the so called common man is most uncommon because we each have God given free will!

This nation - *these* United States - is founded on the liberty of opportunity to excel - to be famous or infamous.

As such our Republic has been exceedingly blessed with great men and women - men and women who have exemplified America - what we are about, and who we are.

Over these past three centuries of independence it becomes obvious that our own lasting revolution was and is grounded on continual change within the constancy of custom and tradition. No paradox there!

America arose out of our collective colonial experiences under English precepts of constitutional democracy wherein our societal principles arose not first out of an unyielding ideology, but rather, requisite on experience tempered by our religion.

This combination determined our evolved philosophy. This is important. This is the genius of America.

This recognition of the sinful vicissitudes of human nature directed our perspective. Mankind is tainted by original sin and for our foreseeable future will always be so.

Unlike the French and Soviet revolutions based on the utopian vision of the perfectability of man here and now (... if we can only gloriously remove certain impediments we will have utopia *NOW*...) - our revolutionary principles are predicated on the imperfectability of man.

There are men and women who have represented our inner soul of definition. We have had at least one in each of the three centuries of our independence.

George Washington is lucidly *sans peur et sans reproche* our 18th century exemplar - one who set our tenor and tone for our people - a tenor and tone that conflated our British origins, that was tempered by our colonial frontier experience, and nourished by the liberty and freedom of opportunity presented.

He arose out of the 18th century to become our *pater patriae*; he represents moral virtue, practical wisdom, chivalry and public spiritedness. Absent Washington, we would have had no recognizable

American republic.

In our democratic value system, IQ in and of itself is not enough. Intelligence is necessary, but there must also be a balance of moral virtue and judgement with public spirit - a balance of duty, honour, and service.

A great man or woman is not made. He or she is not merely trained for this. They are born. Greatness cannot be acquired by study or experience - although those qualities are certainly beneficial.

It is also not dependent on social rank. Greatness is based on character. Difficult to define ... but we all can recognize it!

The first truly quintessential American embodying all of these traits was Washington. Courage in combat, and moral courage in the face of adversarial circumstances, a sense of duty and service to community, a sense of honour, his firm word, all under a guiding Providence. These pragmatic traits provided us with what we were, are, and wish to be.

Deriving out of this example, related by marriage, born of the same soil, was Robert Edward Lee.

In my humble opinion, the finest American of his generation, of the 19th century, and one of the finest men of all time anywhere.

He fed on the manna of our concepts of liberty, of opportunity, of respect for all people and their incarnate differences, public and private virtue, and subordination to our deity.

Lee was a war hero, a gentleman, spiritually guided, self-controlled, family oriented, intensely patriotic, and true to his strongly held philosophical convictions.

He possessed those indefinable elements of character - honour, bearing, magnanimity, humility, Christian love, resoluteness, insight, dignity, deportment, optimism of the human spirit, forthrightness, and was truly inspirational to all with whom he had contact.

As long as virtue is dominant in the republic, so long is the happiness of the people secure.

Marse Robert was grounded in our concerns with original sin and its effects on human nature - how we must conduct ourselves with the understanding of our own sinful nature.

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

There are many things in the Bible which I may never be able to explain, but I accept

it as the infallible Word of God, and receive its teachings as inspired by the Holy Ghost.

Above all things, learn at once to worship your Creator and to do his will as revealed in His Holy Book.

May God rescue us from the folly of our own acts, save us from selfishness and teach us to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Marse Robert was also concerned with the critical idea of freedom from tyranny - of never compromising with tyranny.

His recognition of our own imperfect nature led him and many of his contemporaries (... and not all of them were Southrons ...) to denounce consolidation and centralization of power. He had the conviction of what is right.

I yet believe that the maintenance of the rights and authority reserved in the states and to its people, is not only essential to the adjustment and balance of the general system, but the safeguard to the continuance of a free government.

...our sole object was the establishment of our independence and the attainment of an honourable peace.

It is evident that for Lee, the South did not leave the Union so much as the Union having already lost its constitutional anchor, left the South.

It is difficult to define this great man - that is why we study him so. We sense his greatness and wish to understand and emulate.

He understood what we are forgetting - to respect the differences of others does not mean that we must compromise by jettisoning our own values for the acceptance of those with whom we differ. The politically correct world in which we live is doing exactly that.

In many aspects Lee out-Washingtoned Washington! He was Washington made human.

It is axiomatic to say that adversity brings out the best and the worst in our nature. Washington faced adversity and publicly triumphed. Although we may suspect how he would have conducted himself should he have not triumphed, essentially that is speculative - we do not know what he would have done should he have been defeated and our Republic stillborn.

But we do know how Marse Robert faced up to the adversities of humiliation and defeat.

I did only what my duty demanded. I could have taken no other course without

dishonour. And if it all were to be done over again, I should act in precisely the same manner.

That is a true example to us all.

No hatred, no thirst for revenge, no self-pity, no excuses or blame of others, and no bitterness.

He practiced Christian forgiveness for what the North inflicted and then set an example to all of us for work and study to move forward.

He was the representation to all of duty, service, honour, moral principles, and love.

It is only with great difficulty that we even try to attribute these virtues to his opponents. **Lee was Washington perfected.** He was the quintessential American.

Do your duty in all things ... You cannot do more; you should never wish to do less.

Thank you.