

graybacks marched through the blue ranks to surrender, and as they did so the blue-coats rose up, took their hats off and cheered wildly for Johnny Reb. The Union soldiers walked up and gave the Confederates hardtack, beef, and tobacco. Why this praise? Because the Confederates, outnumbered six to one, defended their city with so much gallantry. U.S. Army soldiers knew honor when they saw it.

And the soldiers in particular wanted their former enemies to be back in the Union, as comrades, as neighbors, as Americans. The monuments served to heal a wounded nation. And former Union soldiers would sometimes donate money to erect monuments to their former enemies. Even to Robert E. Lee.

General Lee will always be the source of much thought and argument, as to whether he is a man to be admired or condemned. Many who were bitter against him had as a source of their bitterness his resignation from the U.S. Army and his oath of office to fight for Virginia and the Confederacy. But many who were bitter about this were also profoundly grateful to him, since he was so instrumental in stopping guerilla war and terrorism, which could have continued the conflict for many, many years.

I'll conclude about the statues with a response of Dwight D. Eisenhower, who said during the Republican National Convention in 1960 that he kept a picture of Lee in his office. A dentist was alarmed at this, and wrote Eisenhower in protest. The president and former soldier wrote this eloquent response:

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 princi-

ple 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, we, in our own time of danger in a divided world, 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

I could not say this better. But in my next insert, I wish to speak about the Confederate flag, which is a different issue than monuments, in my estimation.

## On Confederate Monuments

Many southerners opposed slavery and thought talk of secession to be madness. There were whole regions of the south where cotton was most definitely not king. The farmers in those regions had nothing but contempt for the slave-owning rich men with their plantations.

Some in the North hated slavery because it was wrong, others opposed it because they thought it threatened the jobs of white wage earners, but others very much condoned it because there was money to be made. "The business of the North as well as the South has become adjusted to it [slavery]," wrote a New York merchant. "There are millions upon millions due from Southerners to the merchants and mechanics of this city alone, the payment of which would be jeopardized by any rupture between the North and South. We cannot afford to let the abolitionists succeed in their endeavor to overthrow slavery. It is not a matter of principle with us. It is a matter of business necessity."

The frequent ugliness of capitalism or economics aside, the point here is that things are very mixed in the Civil War. Take the 14th Tennessee Regiment in the Army of Northern Virginia. It left Clarkesville in 1861 with 960 men. After many battles, they were down to 365 on the opening day of the Battle of Gettysburg. After Willoughby Run, they were down to 60. After an attack on Cemetery Ridge, only three survived. Not a single one of those men owned a slave. They were fighting for another reason.

I write this for two purposes. First, I think that the destruction of Confederate monuments and statues by mobs is the mortal sin of usurpation of authority. It is the great crime of vigilantism, which cannot be controlled. With that being said, one can make an argument that vigilantism might be necessary where there is nothing left of law or order. Thus when the Roman Empire finally collapsed, there were no countries or governments to speak of, just royalty and

nobility, and feudalism. But in our country there is still law and there is still order.

I was talking with a gentleman about this, and he mentioned a statue of Lenin, and wondered how I could support it's still standing. If Littleton wanted to put one up, I would oppose it. But if it were already up, I would be against any mob tearing it down. Once mobs start destroying things, they don't stop unless forced to by the police or some other armed group like the National Guard. They never stop with just one statue. And they cannot be reasoned with.

In Robert Bolt's screenplay of *A Man for All Seasons*, there is a short conversation between St. Thomas More and his son-in-law, William Roper. It sums up the Catholic position on vigilantism rather well. Roper: *So now you'd give the Devil benefit of law!*

More: *Yes. What would you do? Cut a great road through the law to get after the Devil?*

Roper: *I'd cut down every law in England to do that!*

More: *Oh? And when the last law was down, and the Devil turned round on you — where would you hide, Roper, the laws all being flat? This country's planted thick with laws from coast to coast — man's laws, not God's — and if you cut them down — and you're just the man to do it — d'you really think you could stand upright in the winds that would blow then? Yes, I'd give the Devil benefit of law, for my own safety's sake.*

One group of people who should have a say about Confederate monuments should be the Union soldiers who fought against the Confederacy. They were very much in favor of Confederate statues. The Confederate monuments and statues you see all over the battlefield of Gettysburg were erected there with Federal approval. Billy Yank fought for many reasons; some of them were abolitionists. But even the most abolitionist among them had great respect for Confederate soldiers. After the siege of Vicksburg — and sieges have a particular bitterness about them due to starvation — the