

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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Email: tjtrinityfound@aol.com Website: www.trinityfoundation.org Telephone: 423.743.0199 Fax: 423.743.2005

## Christians and the Civil War

John W. Robbins

*Editor's note: John Robbins finished this essay December of 2007. After battling cancer for almost three years he went home to be with his Lord on August 14, 2008. He believed and faithfully defended Christ Jesus and the one true Gospel of our King. He lived his life according to Philippians 1:21 - "To live is Christ, to die is gain." May we all endeavor to do the same. "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one Spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries.... Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." - Philippians 1:27ff.*

I grew up on a farm in northeastern Pennsylvania in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>1</sup> and as a youngster I did not know that some Americans were still fighting the Civil War. In elementary school we learned and sang the songs of America, including the songs of the South: "Dixie," "Goober Peas," and Negro Spirituals. (I suppose that the PC police now call them African-American soul songs.)

Living in the South for the past ten years has made it clear to me that many citizens of the South, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, are still fighting a guerrilla war with disinformation, wishful thinking, and propaganda. Some of these Latter Day Confederates seem to be people who were born and reared in the North and now feel they must prove their fidelity to the Lost Cause. Apparently their Northern roots have given them a guilty conscience. What is worse, many of these men profess to be Christians and mix their religion with their love for the Confederacy, making the two inseparable. This has done much damage to the cause of Christ and the proclamation of the Gospel in the South. Men like Steve Wilkins and Douglas Wilson, who have concocted a false theology they call Federal Vision, fooling

thousands, have recently published a book giving a false account of the Civil War. Organizations such as American Vision in Atlanta (Gary DeMar) and Vision Forum in San Antonio (Douglas Phillips) are promoting Confederate propaganda. (Oddly, these groups all have "vision" in their names, yet they are blind to both soteriological and historical truth.) Wannabe Romanists themselves, their efforts are applauded by genuine papists like Thomas DiLorenzo.

Because of this compound of Confederate ideology and counterfeit Christianity, a lot of hooey has been written, published, and reprinted about the Christian nobility and character of the Old South. Even Presbyterian Robert L. Dabney's 1867 book *Defence of Virginia and the South*, which purports to defend Southern slavery from the Bible, has been reprinted. This embarrassing and inexcusable association of Christian theology with Southern slavery has been a stain on Christianity in the South and a hindrance to the proclamation of the Gospel for two centuries. Not simply Dabney's book, of course: More than ten years ago Steve Wilkins and Douglas Wilson, who (falsely) claim to be Reformed, wrote (and plagiarized passages from the book *Time on the Cross*) a modern defense of Southern slavery, *Southern Slavery as It Was*. (When caught several years later, they claimed it was merely a typo.) It is no wonder that the Nation of Islam and other cults have made progress among American Blacks when teachers and pastors who ought to know better promote the Antebellum South as a model of Christian civilization. (Islam has a much worse record with regard to Black slavery than the West, but its spokesmen in the United States seem to be intelligent enough not to write books defending the Islamic enslavement of Blacks.)

Here in the South one occasionally hears people refer to the Civil War as the War of Northern Aggression or the War for Southern Independence. They say it in jest, but there seem to be undertones of both resentment and deadly seriousness. Somehow, they think, the North aggressed against the South, an opinion based, not on

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Robbins received his A.B. from Grove City (Pennsylvania) College, and his M. A. and Ph.D. from The Johns Hopkins University. He was chief of staff for a Member of Congress from 1981 to 1985, and is the author of several books and hundreds of essays.

history, but on Confederate mythology.<sup>2</sup> Part of that mythology involves blaming Lincoln, not only for the war (anyone who thinks Lincoln started the war is seriously misinformed),<sup>3</sup> but also for unconstitutional policies that led to the growth of government in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is a distortion of American history (the Progressive Era and the New Deal would seem to be more likely culprits) for the purpose of defending slavery and the Confederacy by maligning Lincoln and the Union. Some of the pernicious policies pursued by the federal government in the 20<sup>th</sup> century either originated in the South or were the results of the war the Confederacy started.

## The History of East Tennessee

When I moved to East Tennessee in 1998, I was unaware, as most people are unaware, of the history of the Civil War in this region. In 1861 most East Tennesseans were loyal to the Constitution and the American Republic, and they paid dearly for their loyalty. One book that recounts their suffering is *East Tennessee and the Civil War* by Oliver P. Temple of Knoxville, published in 1899. It is an excellent book, written by a man who himself owned slaves until the war began, and yet opposed secession.

Temple began his history of *East Tennessee and the Civil War* by recounting the settlement of the region by people he called "Covenanters," Presbyterians of Scots-Irish descent. (Temple used the word in a broad ethnic sense, rather than the narrow sense of those who signed the Solemn League and Covenant.) Originally from Pennsylvania and Maryland, these Covenanters had moved to North Carolina, fled persecution in that colony by crossing the 6,000-foot peaks between North Carolina and what is now Tennessee, and settled in the valleys of the Holston, Watauga, and Nolichucky Rivers. There they formed the Watauga Association in 1772, wrote and adopted a constitution, which Theodore Roosevelt later described as "the first ever adopted west of the mountains, or by a community composed of American-born freemen.... They were the first men of American birth to establish a free and independent community on the Continent."

In the Watauga Association, according to Temple, there existed no caste, no conventional distinctions.... Unlike Massachusetts and Virginia, there were no religious tests. No man was forced under heavy penalties to pay for the support of a

church whose doctrines and polity he did not approve. No preference was given to one church over another. No one was compelled to attend church under the penalty of banishment. In a word, there was a free state, a free religion, and perfect freedom of conscience.

These principles were later incorporated into the first Constitution of Tennessee in 1796:

[N]o man can, of right, be compelled to attend, erect, or support any place of worship or to maintain any ministry against his consent; that no human authority can, in any case whatever, control or interfere with the rights of conscience; that no preference shall ever be given by law to any religious establishment or mode of worship.

[N]o religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust in this state.

The 1796 Tennessee Constitution went even further by preventing church ministers from holding legislative office. If the phrase "separation of church and state" means anything, it must mean that the same persons cannot hold office in both church and state:

Whereas ministers of the gospel, are, by their profession, dedicated to God and the care of souls, and ought not to be diverted from the great duties of their functions; therefore, no minister of the gospel, or priest of any denomination whatever, shall be eligible to a seat in either house of the legislature.

Yet – and this seems to baffle some people today who cannot or will not distinguish between (1) governors' acknowledging God and Jesus Christ, and (2) governors' forcing or subsidizing private citizens to do so – the first Constitution of Tennessee also provided that "No person who denies the being of God or a future state of rewards and punishments shall hold any office in the civil department of this state." This provision makes it clear what the term "religious test" means in both the Tennessee and U. S. Constitutions: It means denominational test, not doctrinal test.

Temple wrote:

These brave men [of East Tennessee] were everywhere tenacious and jealous of their rights. Their most marked trait was their zeal for and their earnest devotion to their religion. With this was combined an unquenchable love of freedom. Their fathers had fought and won the great battle of religious liberty in Scotland against the combined power of the Anglican Church and the English Crown.... Under the providence of God, the world today owes its civil and religious liberty more to the austere Covenanter of Scotland and to the despised psalm-singing Puritan of England than to all other agencies and influences.... And as these Scots-Irish claimed and demanded, and would have freedom of conscience for themselves, so, contrary to the spirit and practice of the age, they conceded these rights to all others.

2 The official name for the war is The War of the Rebellion, and it is called by that name in the records of the United States.

3 In his First Inaugural, Lincoln made it clear that he did not want war and was not going to start a war: "In *your* hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in *mine*, is the momentous issue of civil war. The Government will not assail *you*. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors.... We must not be enemies." A month later, fanatics in South Carolina attacked their countrymen, American troops stationed at constitutionally-authorized Fort Sumter, and started the war. The Confederacy, as the aggressor, bears the responsibility for 600,000 deaths and all the other consequences of the unjustified, wicked, and foolish rebellion.

This Christian love of liberty, so antithetical to slavery, was reflected in the appearance of one of the first anti-slavery newspapers in Jonesborough, Tennessee, Washington County, in 1819, and the establishment of the Tennessee Manumission Society in Jefferson County in 1815. Citizens from Blount County denounced slavery as “a dishonor to the Christian religion” and “repugnant to the spirit of our Republican government.” Citizens of Washington County condemned slavery as “contrary to the law of God and the principles of our far-famed declaration of independence.” “The Presbyterians,” wrote Temple, “owned most of the slaves.” But they “became greatly aroused on the subject, and took a prominent, if not the leading, part in the movement in favor of emancipation.” It would be accurate to say that East Tennessee was the cradle of the anti-slavery movement in the United States. So many slaves were freed by Tennessee slave holders that by 1831 the Tennessee Legislature, not controlled by the Christians of East Tennessee, forbade further emancipation unless the freedmen were immediately removed from the state.

The government of Tennessee was not alone in thwarting the liberation of slaves, nor in other ways violating Biblical law regarding rights and treatment of slaves. The governments of seven Southern states outlawed manumission. Southern courts even voided the wills of slave holders who wished to free their slaves, thus attacking private property rights as well. The government of Virginia made merely advocating abolition of slavery a felony in 1836. Neither slave marriage nor slave adultery was legally recognized by Southern governments; families were forcibly separated; slaves were bought and sold like cattle; slaves could not make contracts; and even teaching slaves to read and write was legally forbidden. Southern anti-literacy laws alone should have provoked Christians in the South to oppose slavery, for general literacy was a result of the Reformation principle that every person should be able to read the Bible for himself. The Biblical and Constitutional freedoms of speech, press, assembly, religion, and private property were early casualties of the slave power in the South. But that slave power would have been powerless had it not been for the support of Christians like Stonewall Jackson, one of the South’s most brilliant generals. Jackson, in violation of Virginia law, taught slaves to read the Bible in the Presbyterian church in Lexington. But he fought for the very government that legalized and enforced slavery, which made his own actions a crime.

Temple traced the Constitutional loyalty of the citizens of East Tennessee to their Christian, specifically Calvinist, religion and its corollary, the love of freedom. He wrote:

the right of the states to secede from the Union, either peaceably or by force, has at all times been denied by a majority of the greatest statesmen and the best intellects of the land. Of those holding that opinion, I need only mention the names of [Alexander] Hamilton, [John] Marshall, Henry Lee, the father of Robert E. Lee, [Henry] Clay, [Daniel]

Webster, [John C.] Calhoun, [Andrew] Jackson, [Abraham] Lincoln, and [Stephen] Douglas.

Temple even quoted a Confederate icon, Robert E. Lee, who wrote to his son in January 1861, after the legislature of South Carolina had passed its Ordinance of Secession in December, and just a week or so before six more Southern states were to secede from the American Republic. Here are Robert E. Lee’s words:

Secession is nothing but revolution. The framers of our Constitution never exhausted so much labor, wisdom and forbearance in its formation, and surrounded it with so many guards and securities, if it was intended to be broken up by every member of the Confederacy at will. It is intended for “perpetual union,” so expressed in the preamble, and for the establishment of a government, not a compact, which can only be dissolved by revolution, or the consent of all the people in convention assembled. It is idle to talk of secession.

Since Lee held such views in January 1861, it is no wonder that Lincoln offered Lee command of the Republic’s armies that spring. Lee’s decision to refuse the President’s offer and to fight for Virginia and what he himself in January had described as “revolution” was to become a major factor in making the war as bloody and as long as it was.

Temple also quoted Alexander H. Stephens, a member of the Georgia Legislature, addressing the Legislature in late 1860, in opposition to revolution:

The government of the United States is the best and freest government; the most equal in its measures, the most just in its decisions, and the most inspiring in its principle to elevate the race of men, that the Sun of Heaven ever shown upon. Now, for you to attempt to overthrow such a government as this, under which we have lived for more than three-quarters of a century, in which we have gained our wealth, our standing as a nation, our domestic safety, while the elements of peril are around, with peace and tranquillity accompanied with unbounded prosperity and rights unassailed – is the height of madness, folly, and wickedness, to which I can neither lend my sanction nor my vote.

Within a year Stephens was to “lend his sanction” to this “madness, folly, and wickedness” as Vice President of the Confederate States of America.

Temple acknowledged that “there was no justifiable ground for the attempted secession of the eleven Southern States in 1861....” He discussed the causes of secession, as he saw them. His discussion of the Southern attitude toward work, and the South’s generally pagan,<sup>4</sup> agrarian,

4 Some readers might be surprised by the word *pagan*. Spokesmen for the South not only appealed to Greece and Rome as exemplars of civilizations built on slavery, but they espoused views of work and commerce that were held by pagan philosophers such as Aristotle and Cicero. In these senses the mind of the South must be characterized as pagan. Please see my commentary on *Philemon*,

and medieval anti-capitalist mindset, reflected in its acceptance and defense of slavery, is particularly good:

Manufacturing [in the South] received but little encouragement. It served to develop a spirit of independent thought among the operatives, inconsistent with the safety of slavery. Skilled laborers, especially of the higher grade, would read and think and talk. Slavery was naturally repugnant to them, because it degraded them and their own labor. It tended to lower all laborers to the level of slaves. Trading was only tolerated as a necessity. Mining was almost unknown. The mechanic arts were only practiced in a small way.

Planting and war were the only honorable callings aside from the learned professions. Even the learned professions were considered inferior in dignity to the other two. The little land owners who cultivated the fields with their own hands did not rise into the honorable dignity of planters.... Only the man with his broad acres, his drove of negroes, and his overseer was styled a planter.... From the serene heights of his fancied exaltation, the great planter looked down with cold contempt on the large body of Northern men. He regarded them as little tillers of the soil, petty traders, low shop-keepers, enslaved mechanics, howling fanatics, and lovers of money. They were mean in spirit, cowardly, narrow, selfish and abased. Mammon was their God....

The operatives in factories were the slaves of the lordly manufacturers, with fewer comforts than the bondsmen of the South....

The free citizens of East Tennessee were different from much, but not all, of the Confederacy. They voted overwhelmingly – 9 to 1 – to stay in the Union in February 1861 in the last free and legal election to be held on that subject in the state. That would have ended the matter, but the state had a Governor, Isham Harris, who had little regard for either Tennessee's Constitution or the U. S. Constitution. (In their contempt for the Constitution, the secessionists shared common ground with the most violent Abolitionists.) Governor Harris illegally engineered another vote on the question in June 1861. This time only East Tennessee voted (intimidation of voters and voting irregularities occurred in other parts of the state) – overwhelmingly again – to stay in the Union. In August 1861 the citizens of East Tennessee even voted overwhelmingly to reject the Confederate Constitution, preferring the Constitution they had ratified in 1796 and prospered under for 65 years.

## **Confederate Tyranny**

In order to prevent civil war from ravaging East Tennessee, hundreds of the leading men from 31 counties in East Tennessee assembled in Convention several times, first in

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*Slavery and Christianity*, as well as my book *Freedom and Capitalism*.

Knoxville and then in Greeneville, to list their grievances (like the First Continental Congress did in 1774) and to propose measures to keep the peace and avoid war. The *Declaration of Grievances* adopted in June 1861 is a litany of unconstitutional and illegal acts by the secessionist politicians of Tennessee, and criminal acts by private secessionists. Since the *Declaration of Grievances* was drafted so early in the Rebellion, it does not list all the tyrannical policies of the Confederate governments; in fact, it deals only with Tennessee, whose Governor and Legislature illegally entered into a military alliance with the Confederacy after the people of Tennessee had voted overwhelmingly not to leave the Union.

Here is a partial list of the tyrannical policies of Southern governments (to say nothing of slavery itself). The central and state governments of the Confederacy:

- ▶ instituted military conscription;<sup>5</sup>
- ▶ used forced labor in their government-owned factories;
- ▶ preached anti-capitalism in Marxist terms, denouncing the “wage-slavery” of the North;<sup>6</sup>

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5 Confederate Senator Louis Wigfall of Texas asserted that “no man has any individual rights, which come in conflict with the welfare of the country. The government has as much right to exact military service as it has to collect a tax to pay the expenses of the government.” Drafted soldiers constituted between one-fifth and one-third of Southern troops. In the North, which later adopted conscription in a milder form than the South, draftees constituted six percent of troops. Presumably Wigfall would not countenance the Tennessee principle of volunteerism.

Today some confused Christians are decrying conscription of women but supporting conscription of men. They should read my essay “The Bible and the Draft” posted at [trinityfoundation.org](http://trinityfoundation.org) and published in my book *Freedom and Capitalism*, and learn what the Biblical view of conscription is. Both conscription and slavery violate the Eighth Commandment as forms of manstealing.

6 For example, Senator James Hammond of South Carolina in a speech in the Senate March 4, 1858: “[T]he man who lives by daily labor, and scarcely lives at that, and who has to put out his labor in the market and take the best he can get for it – in short, your whole class of manual laborers and ‘operatives’ as you call them, are essentially slaves. The difference between us is, that our slaves are hired for life and well compensated; there is no starvation, no begging, no want of employment among our people, and not too much employment, either. Yours are hired by the day, not cared for, and scantily compensated...” (quoted by Temple, 260).

In 1854 George Fitzhugh, Virginia planter and lawyer, wrote *Sociology for the South*, a book defending slavery. Its subtitle was *The Failure of Free Society*. According to Fitzhugh, few realized “how much of truth, justice and good sense there is in the notions of the Communists, as to the community of property.” He objected to calling free labor “wage slavery,” for that was “a gross libel on slavery.” He wrote: “A Southern farm is the beau ideal of Communism; it is a joint concern, in which the slave consumes more than the master, of the coarse products, and is far happier, because although the concern may fail, he is always sure of support.... The best governed countries...have always been distinguished for the number and stringency of their laws; liberty is an evil which government is intended to correct.” Fitzhugh also damned the Reformation: He astutely recognized what the South must oppose.

- ▶ adopted military aggression as its foreign policy;
- ▶ carried out untold numbers of warrantless searches, seizures, and arrests, starting early in 1861;
- ▶ seized guns from civilians beginning in 1861 (after the war, governments of Southern states would enact the first gun control laws in the U. S.);
- ▶ printed paper money to finance military aggression, leading to runaway inflation;<sup>7</sup>
- ▶ repudiated lawful debts and contracts;
- ▶ took political prisoners;
- ▶ silenced dissent, curtailing freedom of the press, speech, and assembly;
- ▶ instituted a welfare state;<sup>8</sup>
- ▶ created, in less than three years, a bureaucracy of 70,000 in Richmond to manage the socialist Confederacy;
- ▶ regulated agriculture by imposing acreage controls on cotton and tobacco;
- ▶ nationalized control of foreign commerce, regulating exports, raising tariffs, and banning the importation of all “non-essential” goods;
- ▶ occupied East Tennessee with thousands of troops to prevent the counties there from seceding from the Confederacy (as the counties of western Virginia did).

*DeBow's Review*, a Southern secessionist journal, wrote in 1862: “Every man should feel that he has an interest in the State, and that the State in a measure leans upon him.... It is implied in the spirit which times demand, that all private interests are sacrificed to the public good. The State becomes everything, and the individual nothing.”<sup>9</sup> The political ideology of the Confederacy was statist and socialist, and that ideology was to become the dominant political ideology of the twentieth century.

Those Latter Day Confederates who think the North and Lincoln are the sources of modern statism and socialism need to study more Southern history. With the exception of Black slavery, which was ended by the Thirteenth Amendment, the policies of the Confederacy have prevailed throughout the nation in the past century. Now we all live on an unconstitutional, welfare-statist, militaristic, faith-based federal plantation. Our massa in Washington tells us what to do, and his many overseers and drivers make sure we obey. Rather than rejoicing in the spectacular triumph of Confederate ideology in the

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7 The Treasury Department of the Confederate States of America issued more than twice as much paper money as the United States Treasury. In January 1865 a Confederate dollar was worth 1.7 cents. As a result of monetary inflation, prices more than doubled in the North between 1860 and 1864; in the South they multiplied 27 times.

8 “By 1864, more than 37,000 families were receiving some form of relief from the state of Alabama – 37 percent of all the families in the state” (J. R. Hummel, *Emancipating Slaves*, 230).

9 Quoted in Hummel, *Emancipating Slaves*, 238.

twentieth century, Latter Day Confederates are resentful of the fact that they are not the masters and overseers they always imagined and presumed they would be.

It is of course true that the North was not without sin, and I have no desire to portray it as such. The sins of the North are all we read about in the propaganda of the Latter Day Confederates. The North’s “cold, Satanic mills” are contrasted with the idyllic plantations of the South, where one could sit on the veranda and sip mint juleps all day long. That is, if one was a slave master, and not a slave. But had the South not defended slavery, ignored and violated the Constitution, and attacked the United States, the sinful policies of the North – such as a temporary income tax (later declared unconstitutional by an alert Supreme Court when Congress tried it again), paper money (though it was made once again redeemable in gold in 1879), and the temporary suspension of habeas corpus (all of which policies were also adopted by the Confederacy) – would probably not even have been contemplated, let alone temporarily adopted. It was the war the South started that brought all these evils on.

Below is the text of the *Declaration of Grievances* written by a Convention of 287 delegates from 31 counties of East Tennessee in June 1861, as mentioned above. The people of East Tennessee had voted twice, by large majorities, to stay in the Union. The *Declaration of Grievances* describes the illegal election in June 1861, recounts reasons for not seceding from the Union, lists the crimes committed by the secessionists against loyal Tennesseans, and describes, quite accurately, what the results of secession and war would be.

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### **Declaration of Grievances Adopted at the Greeneville Convention**

June 17-20, 1861

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We, the people of East Tennessee, again assembled in a convention of our delegates, make the following declaration in addition to that heretofore promulgated by us at Knoxville, on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> days of May last [1861].

So far as we can learn, the election held in this state on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the present month [June] was free, with but few exceptions, in no part of the state, other than East Tennessee. In the larger parts of Middle and West Tennessee no speeches or discussions in favor of the Union were permitted. Union papers were not allowed to circulate. Measures were taken in some parts of West Tennessee, in defiance of the constitution and laws, which allowed folded tickets, to have the ballots numbered in such manner as to mark and expose the Union votes. A disunion paper, the *Nashville Gazette*, in urging the people to vote an open ticket, declared that a “thief takes a pocketbook, or effects an entrance into forbidden places by stealthy means. A Tory, in voting, usually adopts pretty much the same course of procedure.”

Disunionists, in many places, had charge of the polls, and Union men, when voting, were denounced as Lincolnites and Abolitionists. The unanimity of the votes in many large counties where, but a few weeks ago, the Union sentiment was so strong, proves beyond doubt that Union men were overawed by the tyranny of the military power, and the still greater tyranny of a corrupt and subsidized press. In the city of Memphis, where 5,613 votes were cast, but five free men had the courage to vote for the Union, and these were stigmatized in the public press as "ignorant traitors who opposed the popular edicts."

Our earnest appeal, made at the Knoxville Convention, to our brethren in the other divisions of the state, was published there only to a small extent and the members and names of those who composed our convention, as well as the counties they represented, were suppressed, and the effort made to impress the minds of the people that East Tennessee was favorable to secession. The *Memphis Appeal*, a prominent disunion paper, published a false account of our proceedings, under the head – "*The Traitors in Council*" – and styled us who represented every county but two in East Tennessee "*the little batch of disaffected traitors* who hover around the noxious atmosphere of Andrew Johnson's home."

Our meeting [in Convention] was telegraphed to the *New Orleans Delta*, and it was falsely said that we had passed a resolution recommending submission if 70,000 votes were not cast against secession. The dispatch added that "*the southern rights men are determined to hold possession of the state, though they should be in a minority.*"

Volunteers were allowed to vote in and out of the state, in flagrant violation of the Constitution. From the moment the election was over, and before any detailed statement of the vote in the different counties had been published, and before it was possible to ascertain the result, it was exultantly proclaimed that separation had been carried by from 50,000 to 70,000 votes. This was to prepare the public mind to enable "the secessionists to hold possession of the state though they should be in a minority." The final result is to be announced by a disunion Governor, whose existence depends upon the success of secession, and no provision is made by law for an examination of the vote by disinterested persons, or even for contesting the election.

For these and other causes we do not regard the result of the election as expressive of the will of a majority of the freemen of Tennessee. Had the election everywhere been conducted as it was in East Tennessee, we would entertain a different opinion. Here, no effort was made to suppress secession papers, or prevent secession speeches or votes, although an overwhelming majority of the people were against secession. Here, no effort has been made to prevent the formation of military companies, or obstruct the transportation of armies, or to prosecute those who violated the laws of the United States and of Tennessee against treason. The Union men of East Tennessee, anxious to be neutral in the contest, were content to enjoy their own opinions and to allow the utmost latitude of

opinion and action to those who differed from them. Had the same toleration prevailed in other parts of the state, we have no doubt that a majority of our people would have voted to remain in the Union. But, if this view is erroneous, we have the same (and we think, a much better) right to remain in the Government of the United States than the other divisions of Tennessee have to secede from it.

**We prefer to remain attached to the government of our fathers. The Constitution of the United States has done us no wrong. The Congress of the United States has passed no law to oppress us. The President of the United States has made no threat against the law-abiding people of Tennessee. Under the Government of the United States, we have enjoyed as a nation more of civil and religious freedom than any other people under the whole heaven. We believe there is no cause for rebellion or secession on the part of the people of Tennessee. None was assigned by the legislature in their mis-called Declaration of Independence. No adequate cause can be assigned. The select committee of that body asserted a gross and inexcusable falsehood in their address to the people of East Tennessee, when they declared that the Government of the United States had made war upon them. The secession cause has thus far been sustained by deception and falsehood: by falsehoods as to the action of Congress; by false dispatches as to battles that were never fought and victories that were never won; by false accounts as to the purposes of the President; by false representations as to the views of Union men; and by false pretenses as to the facility with which the secession troops would take possession of the Capitol [in Washington, D.C.] and capture the highest officers of the government.**

The cause of secession or rebellion has no charm for us, and its progress has been marked by the most alarming and dangerous attacks upon the public liberty. In other states, as well as our own, its whole course threatens to annihilate the last vestige of freedom. While peace and prosperity have blessed us in the Government of the United States, the following may be enumerated as the fruits of secession:

It was urged forward by members of Congress who were sworn to support the Constitution of the United States and were themselves supported by the government.

It was effected without consultation with all the states interested in the slavery question, and without exhausting peaceable remedies.

It has plunged the country into civil war, paralyzed our commerce, interfered with the whole trade and business of the country, lessened the value of property, destroyed many of the pursuits of life, and bids fair to involve the whole nation in irretrievable bankruptcy and ruin.

It has changed the entire relations of states, and adopted constitutions without submitting them to a vote of the people, and where such a vote has been authorized, it has

been upon the condition prescribed by Senator Mason of Virginia, that those who voted the Union ticket "*must leave the state.*"

It has advocated a constitutional monarchy, a king and a dictator, and is through the Richmond press at this moment, recommending to the convention in Virginia a restriction of the right of suffrage, and "in severing connection with the Yankees, *to abolish every vestige of resemblance to the institutions of that detested race.*"

It has formed military leagues, passed military bills and opened the door for oppressive taxation without consulting the people, and then in mockery of a free election has required them by their votes to sanction their usurpations under the penalties of moral proscription or at the point of the bayonet.

It has offered a premium for crime in directing the discharge of volunteers from criminal prosecutions and in recommending the judges not to hold their courts.

It has stained our statute book with the repudiation of Northern debts, and has greatly violated the constitution by attempting through its unlawful extension to destroy the right of suffrage.

It has called upon the people in the State of Georgia, and may soon require the people of Tennessee, to contribute all their surplus cotton, corn, wheat, bacon, beef, *etc.*, to the support of pretended governments alike destitute of money and credit.

It has attempted to destroy the accountability of public servants to the people by secret legislation, and has set the obligation of an oath at defiance.

It has passed laws declaring it treason to say or do anything in favor of the Government of the United States, or against the Confederate States, and such a law is now before, and we apprehend will soon be passed by, the legislature of Tennessee.

It has attempted to destroy, and, we fear soon will, utterly prostrate the freedom of speech and of the press.

It has involved the Southern States in a war, whose success is hopeless, and which must ultimately lead to the ruin of the people.

Its bigoted, overbearing and intolerant spirit has already subjected the people of East Tennessee to many petty grievances; our people have been insulted; our flags have been fired upon and torn down; our houses have been rudely entered; our families subjected to insult; our peaceable meetings interrupted; our women and children shot at by a merciless soldiery; our towns pillaged, our citizens robbed, and some of them assassinated and murdered.

No effort has been spared to deter the Union men of East Tennessee from the expression of their free thoughts. The penalties of treason have been threatened against them, and murder and assassination have been openly encouraged by leading secession journals. As secession has thus been overbearing and intolerant while in the minority in East Tennessee, nothing better can be

expected of the pretended majority than wild, unconstitutional and oppressive legislation; an utter contempt and disregard of law; a determination to force every Union man in the state to swear to the support of a constitution he abhors, to yield his money and property to aid a cause he detests, and to become the object of scorn and derision as well as the victim of intolerable and relentless oppression.

In view of these considerations, and of the fact that the people of East Tennessee have declared their fidelity to the Union by a majority of about 20,000 votes, therefore we do resolve and declare:

### **Resolutions**

*First.* That we do earnestly desire the restoration of peace to our whole country, and most especially that our own section of the State of Tennessee should not be involved in civil war.

*Second.* That the action of our state legislature in passing the *so-called* "Declaration of Independence," and in forming the "Military League" with the Confederate States, and in adopting other acts looking to a separation of the State of Tennessee from the Government of the United States, is unconstitutional and illegal, and, therefore, not binding upon us as loyal citizens.

*Third.* That in order to avert a conflict with our brethren in other parts of the state, and desiring that every constitutional means shall be resorted to for the preservation of peace, we do, therefore, constitute and appoint O. P. Temple of Knox [County], John Netherland of Hawkins [County], and James P. McDowell of Greene [County], commissioners, whose duty it shall be to prepare a memorial and cause the same to be presented to the General Assembly of Tennessee, now in session, asking its consent that the counties composing East Tennessee, and such counties in Middle Tennessee as desire to cooperate with them, may form and erect a separate state.

*Fourth.* Desiring, in good faith, that the General Assembly will grant this our reasonable request, and still claiming the right to determine our own destiny, we do further resolve that an election be held in all the counties of East Tennessee, and in such other counties in Middle Tennessee, adjacent thereto, as may desire to co-operate with us, for the choice of delegates to represent them in a general convention to be held in the town of Kingston, at such time as the president of this Convention, or in case of his absence or inability, any one of the vice-presidents, or, in like case with them, the secretary of this Convention may designate; and the officer so designating the day for the assembling of said Convention, shall also fix the time for holding the election herein provided for, and give reasonable notice thereof.

*Fifth.* In order to carry out the foregoing resolution, the sheriffs of the different counties are hereby requested to open and hold said election, or cause the same to be so held, in the usual manner and at the usual places of voting, as prescribed by law; and in the event the sheriff of any county should fail or refuse to open and hold said

election, or cause the same to be done, the coroner of such county is requested to do so; and should such coroner fail or refuse, then any constable of such county is hereby authorized to open and hold said election, or cause the same to be done. And if in any county none of the above-named officers will hold said election, then any justice of the peace or freeholder in such county is authorized to hold the same or cause it to be done. The officer or other person holding said election shall certify the result to the president of this Convention or to such officer as may have directed the same to be holden, at any early a day thereafter as practicable, and the officer to whom said returns may be made shall open and compare the polls and issue certificates to the delegates elected.

*Sixth.* That in said Convention the several counties shall be represented as follows: The county of Knox shall elect three delegates; the counties of Washington, Greene and Jefferson, two delegates each; and the remaining counties shall each elect one delegate....

Below are some excerpts from the Memorial proposing the creation of a new state in East Tennessee presented to the Tennessee Legislature by the commissioners of the Greeneville Convention.

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**The Memorial Proposing the Secession  
of East Tennessee from Tennessee  
Presented to the Tennessee Legislature**

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*To the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee:*

...The idea of a separate political existence is not a recent one, but it is not deemed necessary here to restate the geographical, social, economical, and industrial reasons which have often been urged in support of it. The reasons which operated upon the Convention and seemed to them conclusive was the action of the two sections, respectively, at the election held on the 8<sup>th</sup> instant to determine the future national relations of the state. In that election the people of East Tennessee, by a majority of nearly twenty thousand votes, decided to adhere to the Federal Union, established prior to the American Revolution, and to which Tennessee was admitted in the year 1796; while the rest of the state is reported to have decided, by a majority approaching even more nearly to unanimity, to leave the Federal Union and to join the body politic recently formed under the name of the Confederate States of America. The same diversity of sentiment was exhibited, but less distinctly, at the election of the 9<sup>th</sup> of February last, when the people of East Tennessee decided by a heavy majority against holding a convention to discuss and determine our Federal relations, overcoming by nearly fourteen thousand the majority in the rest of the state in favor of such a convention.

This hopeless and irreconcilable difference of opinion and purpose leaves no alternative but the separation of the two sections of the state; for it is not to be presumed that either would for a moment think of subjugating the other or of coercing it into a political condition repugnant alike to its interest and to its honor. Certainly the people of East

Tennessee entertain no such purpose toward the rest of the state. And the avowals of their Western brethren, in connection with their recent political action, have been too numerous and explicit to leave us in any doubt as to their views.

It remains, therefore, that measures be adopted to effect a separation, amicably, honorably, and magnanimously, by a settlement of boundaries, so as to divide East Tennessee, and any contiguous counties or districts which may desire to adhere to her, from the rest of the state, and by a fair, just and equitable division of the public property and the common liabilities. It has occurred to the undersigned as the best method of accomplishing this most desirable end, that your body should take immediate action in the premises by giving a formal assent to the proposed separation, pursuant to the provisions of section 3, article 4, of the Constitution of the United States, and by convoking a Convention representing the sovereign power of the people of the respective divisions of Tennessee, with plenary authority to so amend the Constitution of the state as to carry into effect the change contemplated....

Awaiting a response to this Memorial, the undersigned beg to add assurances of every endeavor on their part not only to preserve the peaceful relations heretofore subsisting between the people in the two sections of the state, but to remove, as far as possible, all causes of disturbance in the future, so that each may be left free to follow its chosen path of prosperity and honor, unembarrassed by any collision with the other.

O. P. Temple, John Netherland, Jas. P. McDowell

**Conclusion**

This peaceful and constitutional attempt by the people of East Tennessee to avoid civil war by peacefully separating from the rest of the state, which was engaged in an aggressive war against the U. S. Constitution and those loyal to it, was quickly answered by military force. In 1861 thousands of Confederate troops occupied East Tennessee in order to prevent its secession from the Confederacy. At its Constitutional Convention the Confederacy had deliberately refused to include the right of secession in its own Constitution (though it preposterously claimed the right of secession was in the U.S. Constitution), and it made slavery the inviolable principle of its new constitution. Now the Confederate government was forcing East Tennessee to remain in the Confederacy against its will. The peaceful 1861 petition of the East Tennesseans was answered by 10,000 Confederate troops marching into East Tennessee.

I hope this bit of American history will make some people realize that they have been fooled by less than honest writers who may claim to be Christian and to favor freedom and Constitutional government. Confederate propaganda is not accurate history.

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Free Book Offer - *Slavery & Christianity* free to the first 500 who write to request it.