

Robert E. Lee
Servant of God – Leader of Men
Arlington National Cemetery

Across the Potomac River in Virginia, in a direct straight line with the Lincoln Memorial, lies Arlington National cemetery. This site was the original 1,100 acre plantation belonging to Gen. Robert E. Lee, who married Mary Anne Randolph Custis, only surviving child of George Washington Park Custis, (George Washington's adopted grandson), and Mary Lee Fitzhugh.

At the break of the Civil War, Robert E. Lee resigned from the U.S. Army, stating that he could not lift his hand against family and friends of his native Virginia. His plantation home unoccupied, Union forces soon took over the premises. A law required that all private property owners should appear in person to pay their taxes. Mrs. Lee sent a cousin to pay the taxes amounting to \$97.04. The government turned it down, however, purchasing the estate on public auction shortly thereafter. Union troops soon took over the estate. It was thus that Robert E. Lee's Arlington home became a nation cemetery.

Twenty years later, Custis Lee, Gen. Lee's son, took his father's last Will and Testament to the Supreme Court. The court's ruling reinstated Lee as rightful owner of this estate. Unable to live on the site of a now-established cemetery, however, Lee sold it to the U.S. government in 1883 for a hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

Robert E. Lee's Genius

General Robert E. Lee, the great leader of the Confederate army in the Civil War, was a military genius. Considered to be in the ranks of the greatest military leaders in all history, he was also loved and respected as a Christian gentleman in the north, as well as in his native Virginia and the southern states.

Lee's Origins

Born in 1807, he was the fourth son of Major General Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee, a Revolutionary war hero, and Anne Hill Carter, a direct descendant of Robert "King" Carter, one of the most noble and significant figures of Virginia's golden age in the early 18th century. He grew up in his family home built in 1795, an outstanding example of federal architecture. It stands as a unique landmark at 607 Oronoco Street in Alexandria.

When Robert was six, his father; ill and broken in spirit, left the family for Barbados and never returned. The former hero died on his way back when Robert was 11, so that he was raised by his mother from age six. Anne Hill Carter, one of the little-celebrated heroines of America, brought up her five children almost single-handedly, giving them a magnificent example of Christian virtue, and molding their characters upon Scripture truth.

Lee's Formative Years

Fitzhugh Lee, a distinguished contemporary, wrote the following regarding Lee's early life:

If he inherited much from a long and illustrious line of paternal ancestors, he no less fell heir to the strong characteristics of his mother's family, one of the oldest and best in Virginia. The unselfishness, generosity, purity, and faithfulness of the Virginia Carters are widely known, and they have always been "true to all occasions true." In his mother was personified all the gentle and sweet traits of a noble woman. Her whole life was admirable, and her love for her children beyond all other thoughts. To her watchful care they were early confided by the long absence and death of her distinguished husband.

Robert was four years old when his father removed the family to Alexandria, six when he visited the West Indies for his health, and eleven when he died. If he was early trained in the way he should go, his mother trained him. If he was "always good," as his father wrote, she labored to keep him so. If his principles were sound and his life a success, to her, more than to any other, should the praise be given...As Robert grew in years, he grew in grace; he was like the young tree whose roots, firmly imbedded in the earth, hold it straight from the hour it was first planted till it develops into majestic proportions. With the fostering care of such a mother the son must go straight, for she had planted him in the soil of truth, morality, and religion, so that his boyhood was marked by everything that produces nobility of character in manhood. The handsome boy was studious and sedate, was popular with the other boys, stood high in the estimation of his teachers, and his early inspiration was good, for his first thoughts were directed upon subjects by an excellent mother.

At age 18, Lee entered the United States Military Academy, West Point, as a cadet to train for his distinguished career. In the 1830's he became a lieutenant. Lee married Mary Ann Randolph Custis, only surviving child of George Washington Parke Custis, who as George Washington's adopted grandson. They had seven children.

Though deeply devoted to his family, Lee's military career required long separations from his loved ones, taken him to many parts of the country. In 1846, when the United States declared war on Mexico, Lee was called into active duty, and his bravery and military skills won him recognition and promotion....

Lee greatly loved the Union, having devoted his adult life to its service as a soldier. He was opposed to secession. The following excerpt is from a letter he wrote from Texas where he was stationed, to his favorite cousin, Martha Custis Williams just months before the Civil War began:

January 22, 1861

God alone can save us from our folly, selfishness & shortsightedness. The last accounts seem to show that we have barely escaped anarchy to be plunged into civil war. What will be the result I cannot conjecture. I only see that a federal calamity is upon us, & fear that the country will have to pass through for its sins a fiery ordeal. I am unable to realize that our people will destroy a government inaugurated by the blood & wisdom of our patriot fathers, that has given us peace & prosperity at home, power and security abroad, & under which we have acquired a colossal strength unequalled in the history of mankind. I wish to live under no other government, & there is no sacrifice I am not ready to make for the preservation of the Union save that of honour. If a disruption takes place, I shall go back in sorrow to my people & share the misery of my native state, & save in her defence there will be one soldier less and no other air than "Hail Columbia." I still hope the wisdom and patriotism of the nation will yet save it.

The Battle of Gettysburg

The Battle of Gettysburg in July of 1863 was the greatest battle of the Civil War. The Southern army of 75,000 men met the North's 90,000 in Union territory. Lasting three days, the Confederates had the advantage for the first two days, pushing the Union back, but on the third day the Union gained the victory, and the Confederate troops were left with no choice but to retreat back to Virginia in a dreary rainstorm, having lost over 20,000 men, dead or wounded.

Robert E. Lee Proclaims Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer

Gettysburg marked a turning point in the war; the South no longer had the battle against the North. Though there would be another two years of fighting, the North began getting an upper hand with their superior resources and manpower. On August 21, Jefferson Davis called for a day of fasting and prayer. Lee issued the following order regarding it:

General Order No. 83

Headquarters Army Northern Virginia, August 13, 1863

The President of the Confederate States has, in the name of the people, appointed the 21st day of August as a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer. A strict observance of the day is enjoined upon the officers and soldiers of this army. All military duties, except such as are absolutely necessary, will be suspended. The commanding officers of brigades and regiments are requested to cause divine services, suitable to the occasion,

to be performed in their respective commands.

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 our strength. Let us humble ourselves before Him. Let us confess our many sins, and beseech Him to give us a higher courage, a purer patriotism, and more determined will; that He will convert the hearts of our enemies; that He will hasten the time when war, with its sorrows and sufferings, shall cease, and that He will give us a name and place among the nations of the earth.

Chaplain Jones of the Confederate Army reported the following regarding the spiritual revival which resulted from this day of fasting, humiliation and prayer:

We can never forget the effect produced by the reading of this order at the solemn services of that memorable fast day. A precious revival was already in progress in many of the commands. The day was almost universally observed; the attendance upon preaching and other services was very large; the solemn attention and starting tear attested the deep interest felt; and the work of grace among the troops widened and deepened, and went gloriously on until there had been at least fifteen thousand professions of faith in Christ as a personal Saviour. How far these grand results were due to this fast-day, or to the quiet influence and fervent prayers of the commanding general, eternity alone shall reveal.

Lee's Christianity

Author Benjamin Howell Griswold, Jr. in his book, *The Spirit of Lee and Jackson*, wrote:

...Lee and Jackson were both professing Christians – most men of their day were that – but on the premise that these men not only professed Christianity, but actually practiced it and endeavored in every way to live according to its much neglected tenets. They were great readers of the Bible, and nearly every act of their lives was directed by their interpretation of its maxims. This was true of their actions not only at home toward their family and neighbors, but even in the camp and on the battlefield toward their enemies...Humility, purity, Peacemaking, Love of Righteousness – virtues neglected – if not a little despised today, seem to have exalted these men and lifted them from the depths of defeat to the pinnacle of fame...

Robert E. Lee's last days were written by Colonel Johnston for Reverend J.W. Jones. Colonel Johnston was an intimate friend of the general and a distinguished member of the faculty of his college. He was one of those at the bedside of the dying general. It is being excerpted below in order to shed further light on Lee's true character and Christian comportment:

The death of General Lee was not due to any sudden cause, but was the result of agencies dating as far back as 1863...In October, 1869, he was again attacked by inflammation of the heart-sac, accompanied by muscular rheumatism of the back, right side, and arms. The action of the heart was weakened by this attack...His decline was rapid, yet gentle; and soon after nine o'clock in the morning of October 12th he closed his eyes, and his soul passed peacefully from earth...General Lee's closing hours were consonant with his noble and disciplined life. Never was more beautifully displayed how a long and severe education of mind and character enables the soul to pass with equal step through this supreme ordeal; never did the habits and qualities of a lifetime, solemnly gathered into a few last sad hours, more grandly maintain themselves amid the gloom and shadow of approaching death. The reticence, the self-contained composure, the obedience to proper authority, the magnanimity and the Christian meekness, that marked all his actions still preserved their sway, in spite of the inroads of disease and the creeping lethargy that weighed down his faculties...Leaning trustfully upon the all-sustaining Arm, the man whose stature, measured by mortal standards, seemed so great, passed from this world of shadows to the realities of the Hereafter.

Historic Arlington National Cemetery

About 280,000 people are buried here. Only retired military or those on active duty, the wives and widows of military, children of military under 18 years of age, and the recipients of the gold Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, the Distinguished Service Medal, the Navy Cross, the Silver Star and the Purple Heart, have the right to be buried at Arlington.

Most of the tombstones, that is, those of regular dimensions, are provided by the government. A circle upon the face of each shows forth a cross in the vast majority of cases, designating the individual's faith at time of death.

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

A steep climb to the summit of Arlington National Cemetery takes us to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier of the first and second World Wars; the Korean War and the Vietnam War. This seventy-two ton block of carved white marble bears the poignant inscription:

Here lies in Honored Glory an American Soldier known but to God

An Honor Guard, the Third United States Infantry and official Presidential Unit resolutely guards this sacred tombstone, twenty-four hours a day. The inspection and changing of the guard is a memorable occasion for all who witness this moving ceremony.

Lesson Eight
Pupils' Guide

- vii) Who qualify to have their mortal remains buried at Arlington National Cemetery? (Circle all correct answers)
- a) Active military
 - b) Retired military
 - c) U.S. Presidents
 - d) Foreign heroes
 - e) Wives and widows of military
 - f) Children of military under 18 years of age
 - g) Recipients of medals of honor
 - h) Heads of State
- viii) What do the tombstones at Arlington National Cemetery show upon their faces in the vast majority of cases? (Circle one)
- a) A triangle
 - b) A rectangle
 - c) The cross of Jesus Christ
 - d) A half moon
- ix) Whom does the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier acknowledge as Omniscient (All-knowing)? (Circle one)
- a) A Greek deity
 - b) A Roman god
 - c) Almighty God of the Bible
 - d) Hercules
- x) Who was Robert E. Lee? (Circle all correct answers)
- a) A Virginia
 - b) Leader of the Confederate Army
 - c) A naval hero
 - d) A military genius
 - e) A surveyor

- f) A Christian
 - g) Leader of the Union Army
 - h) A General
- xiii) In Lee's January 22, 1861 letter to his cousin, Martha Custis Williams, whom Does he state can save us; and from what? (Circle one)
- a) The Federal Government; calamity
 - b) The media; bad publicity
 - c) The Union; anarchy
 - d) God alone; folly, selfishness, short-sightedness and sin
- xv) In his General Order; whom does Lee state is our only refuge and strength? (Circle one)
- a. The Confederate Army
 - b. The cavalry
 - c. Stonewall Jackson
 - d. Almighty God
- xvi) According to Chaplain Jones of the Confederate Army, the result of this Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer was a work of grace among the troops, which widened and deepened, causing at least: (Consult your text and fill in the blanks)
- a) 500 professions of faith in Christ as a personal Saviour
 - b) 1,000 professions of faith in Christ as a personal Saviour
 - c) 5,000 professions of faith in Christ as a personal Saviour
 - d) 15,000 professions of faith in Christ as a personal Saviour
- xvii) What results does Chaplain Jones state "eternity alone shall reveal" in terms of Robert E. Lee's actions during this Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer? (Circle one)
- a. Lack of interest and participation
 - b. Absence
 - c. Quiet influence and fervent prayer
 - d. Resignation and "moment of silence"
- xviii) Author Benjamin Howell Griswold, Jr. states that Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson were great readers of: (Circle one)
- a. Newspapers
 - b. Mystery stories
 - c. The Bible
 - d. Westerns

- xix) What Biblical qualities does this author affirm Robert E. Lee practiced, not only at home, but also in the camp, and toward his enemies, which lifted him to the pinnacle of fame? (Circle all correct answers)
- a) Arrogance
 - b) Humility
 - c) Revenge
 - d) Purity
 - e) Peacemaking
 - f) Mercilessness
 - g) Love of righteousness
- xx) Colonel Johnston was an intimate friend of Lee, and a distinguished faculty member of his college. In his eyewitness account of the General's dying moments reflect Lee's true character traits in action. They are: (Circle all correct answers)
- a) Impatience
 - b) Anger
 - c) Reticence
 - d) Hatred
 - e) Self-contained composure
 - f) Obedience to proper authority
 - g) Boastfulness
 - h) Magnanimity
 - i) Bitterness
 - j) Christian meekness
- xxii) "Leaning trustfully" upon whose "arm" does the above eye-witness account of Lee's death refer to? (Circle one)
- a) Brahman
 - b) Stonewall Jackson
 - c) Almighty God of the Bible
 - d) Chaplain Jones

V. Memory Scripture:

O Lord, my heart is not proud, Nor
my eyes haughty; Nor do I involve
myself in great matters, or in things
too difficult for me. Surely I have
composed and quieted my soul; Like
a weaned child rests against his mother;
my soul is like a weaned child within
me. Psalm 131: 1-2

Answers to Questions

- vii) a; b; e; f; g
- viii) c
- ix) c
- x) a; b; d; f; h
- xiii) d
- xv) d
- xvi) d
- xvii) c
- xviii) c
- xix) b; d; e; h
- xx) c; e; f; h; j
- xxii) c

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