

# The Charge to The Sons of Confederate Veterans

John H. Land

The Charge given to the Sons of Confederate Veterans by General Stephen Dill Lee at the April 1906 New Orleans Reunion of the United Confederate Veterans is considered the foundational document of the SCV. At every gathering of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, the Charge is recited. Yet, how often is this done without considering its meaning?

There are many things we do routinely while not considering the real significance of them. How often do we sit down each evening for a supper that may last twenty minutes or so, without thinking of the hours that went into the preparation? In church services we pray the Lord's Prayer without considering what it is really saying. And if we were to seriously consider the principles being promoted in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U. S. Flag, many of us would no longer recite it.

*To you, Sons of Confederate Veterans,*

The charge is given to male descendants of those men who served honorably in the Confederate forces. It was not given to the United Daughters of the Confederacy though it is an older organization than the SCV. Men are the ones who are to be the defenders; defenders of their country, their homes, their families, and their culture. This defense is a great responsibility, and is not to be taken lightly, especially in today's climate when our Southern culture is under such attack.

*We commit the vindication of the Cause for which we fought.*

Vindication is justification, to show that an action is right and reasonable according to the rules and the circumstances. To kill a person is a violation of law, called homicide. But to kill a person to prevent that person from harming another is reasonable according to the law, and is termed justifiable homicide. The cause, the reason

behind the action, determines whether it was justified.

A person accused of wrongdoing will engage a defense attorney to present evidence in a court of law that his actions and the cause for them were in accord with the law and the circumstances, and therefore were justified. We, the Sons of Confederate Veterans, have been engaged by our Confederate ancestors, through the Charge, to act as their defense attorneys, presenting such evidence.

Confederate monuments were established to honor the Confederate soldier who fought to defend his country, home, and family against invasion. All efforts should be made to protect them and prevent their removal from the public square. But protecting monuments does not fulfill the charge. Only presenting evidence of the true history of the War for Southern Independence can do that.

Erecting Confederate flags is an excellent way to remind the public there are still people who honor their Confederate ancestors and the cause for which they fought. But putting up flags does not fulfill the charge. Only presenting true historical facts about the Northern invasion of the South does that.

There is no other way to provide the vindication for which the Charge calls other than to present the true historic evidence that academic historians and the main-stream media ignore.

*To your strength will be given the defense of the Confederate soldier's good name,*

A person accused of wrongdoing has his reputation brought into disrepute. Shame is brought upon his name, which all in his family bear. Providing evidence that the person did not commit a wrong, but acted properly restores his good reputation and clears his family name.

*The guardianship of his history,*

The Charge gives the method of providing vindication, and defending the soldier's good name; presenting a full and accurate history. A false history, an account of actions and reasons for those actions that is false will result in a false charge. Truth is the antidote for falsehood. The truthful history has to be both accurate and complete. Before a witness testifies in a court of law, he swears to tell the truth and the whole truth. A partial truth can be as false as telling something totally untrue. We have to ensure the true, complete history of the War for Southern Independence is told.

*The emulation of his virtues,*

This raises the issue of credibility. We are all familiar with the phrase "I wouldn't believe him if he swore on a stack of Bibles". Only a person who is known to be *honest* and *truthful* will be believed.

*Duty* requires that what is right is defended. *Courage* is required to present a truthful history in the face of great opposition. *Perseverance* is needed because the objective will not be achieved in a short amount of time. We did not arrive in our present situation overnight. And just as our Confederate ancestors persevered during most difficult times, we must 'stick to it' even when circumstances seem to be most against us. This will require *discipline* to keep striving. And it must be done with *courtesy* toward even those who oppose us. Courtesy is a well-known trait of Southerners. We will even "bless their hearts" while knowing how foolish and wrong they are.

*The perpetuation of those principles which he loved and you love also,*

The Confederate soldier was dedicated to the principle that his state had sovereignty which the central government could not usurp. And he was dedicated to the principles of the Constitution, the agreement among the states which created the federal government with certain, limited powers. And a government could only be legitimate if it had the consent of the governed.

*And those ideals which made him glorious and which you also cherish.*

The Confederate soldier was dedicated to the ideal of liberty, that each person was free from arbitrary government rule. That government is established to preserve the rights of people and could be altered or abolished if it did not protect those rights. That government is based on the consent of the people.

To fulfill The Charge, every Compatriot of the Sons of Confederate Veterans should be completely familiar with the historical facts surrounding the issues and events of the War for Southern Independence.

Each Compatriot should be equipped with the ability to share that information with those who are not aware of it. The Socratic Method, using questions to initiate a discussion, is often the best and most non-threatening way to do this. Questions are non-threatening and require the listener focus on the issue rather than thinking what response they will give.