

Note: Andrew H. Stephens of Georgia was originally against seceding from the Union. He served as vice-president of the Confederacy.

CONFEDERATE MONUMENTS: LESSON 2: HANDOUT 5: STEPHENS SPEECH EXCERPT

EXCERPT FROM ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS, "CORNERSTONE ADDRESS" (MARCH 21, 1861).¹

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Our new Government is founded upon exactly the opposite ideas; its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery, subordination to the superior race, is his natural and moral condition. [Applause.]

Here, Stephens says that Black people are not equal to White people and that slavery is natural and moral because of this.

He claims that the history of the world is based on this fact.

This, our new Government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth. This truth has been slow in the process of its development, like all other truths in the various departments of science. It is so even amongst us. Many who hear me, perhaps, can recollect well that this truth was not generally admitted, even within their day.

The errors of the past generation still clung to many as late as twenty years ago. Those at the North who still cling to these errors with a zeal above knowledge, we justly denominate fanatics. All fanaticism springs from an aberration of the mind; from a defect in reasoning. It is a species of insanity.

He calls northerners crazy for being against slavery.

One of the most striking characteristics of insanity, in many instances, is, forming correct conclusions from fancied or erroneous premises; so with the anti-slavery fanatics: their conclusions are right if their premises are.

¹ Alexander H. Stephens, "Cornerstone Address, March 21, 1861 " in *The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events with Documents, Narratives, Illustrative Incidents, Poetry, etc.*, vol. 1, ed. Frank Moore (New York: O.P. Putnam, 1862), pp. 44-46. Source: *Internet Modern History Sourcebook*, © Paul Halsall, July 1998.

<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1861stephens.asp>

Stephens says: Northerners think that Black people are equal to White people and should have equal rights. They think that the South should be forced to give up slavery.

They assume that the negro is equal, and hence conclude that he is entitled to equal privileges and rights, with the white man.... I recollect once of having heard a gentleman from one of the Northern States, of great power and ability, announce in the House of Representatives, with imposing effect, that we of the South would be compelled, ultimately, to yield upon this subject of slavery; that it was as impossible to war successfully against a principle in politics, as it was in physics or mechanics.

That the principle would ultimately prevail. That we, in maintaining slavery as it exists with us, were warring against a principle—a principle founded in nature, the principle of the equality of man. The reply I made to him was, that upon his own grounds we should succeed, and that he and his associates in their crusade against our institutions would ultimately fail. The truth announced, that it was as impossible to war successfully against a principle in politics as well as in physics and mechanics, I admitted, but told him it was he and those acting with him who were warring against a principle. They were attempting to make things equal which the Creator had made unequal.

Here, Stephens says that God the creator made Black and White men unequal. He believes that the truth shall prevail, or win. The South will win on this subject of slavery.

Stephens says: The South's social fabric is rooted in this truth that slavery is necessary and natural. All the civilized world recognizes this truth.

In the conflict thus far, success has been on our side, complete throughout the length and breadth of the Confederate States. It is upon this, as I have stated, our social fabric is firmly planted; and I cannot permit myself to doubt the ultimate success of a full recognition of this principle throughout the civilized and enlightened world.