

CONSTITUTION OF THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA

March 11, 1861

Preamble

We, the people of the Confederate States, each State acting in its sovereign and independent character, in order to form a permanent federal government, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity invoking the favor and guidance of Almighty God do ordain and establish this Constitution for the Confederate States of America.

Article I.

Section 9.

- (4) No bill of attainder, ex post facto law, or law denying or impairing the right of property in negro slaves, shall be passed....¹

Article IV.

Section 2.

The citizens of each State shall be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States, and shall have the right of [transport] and [travel] in any State of this Confederacy, with their slaves and other property; and the right of property in said slaves shall not be...impaired....

- (3) No slave or other person held to service or labor in any State or Territory of the Confederate States, under the laws thereof, escaping or lawfully carried into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor; but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such slave belongs, or to whom such service or labor may be due....

Source: Richardson, J. D. (1905). A compilation of the messages and papers of the Confederacy including the diplomatic correspondence 1861-1865. United States Publishing Company. Retrieved July, 1, 2020, from https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/csa_csa.asp

“CORNERSTONE” SPEECH

Alexander H. Stephens, March 21, 1861

...I was remarking that we are passing through one of the greatest revolutions in the [history] of the world. Seven States have within the last three months thrown off an old government and formed a new....

...But not to be [slow] in [listing] the numerous changes for the better [in our new Constitution], allow me to allude to one other though last, not least. The new Constitution has put at rest,

¹ Slavery can never be made illegal in the Confederate States of America. This is a significant change from the U.S. constitution, and it highlights the importance of slavery to the newly founded Confederate States of America.

forever, all the agitating questions relating to our peculiar institution, African slavery as it exists amongst us the proper status of the negro in our form of civilization. This was the immediate cause of the late rupture and present revolution.² [President Thomas] Jefferson in his forecast, had anticipated [slavery], as the "rock upon which the old Union would split." He was right. What was [theory] with him, is now a realized fact....

Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its corner-stone 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 normal condition.

Source: Stephens, A. H. (1861, March 21). Cornerstone speech. Teaching American History. Retrieved July 1, 2020, from <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/cornerstone-speech/>

² Alexander Stephens, vice President of the Confederacy, states that preserving the institution of slavery was the "immediate cause" of secession.